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ORATORY

— BEECHER —



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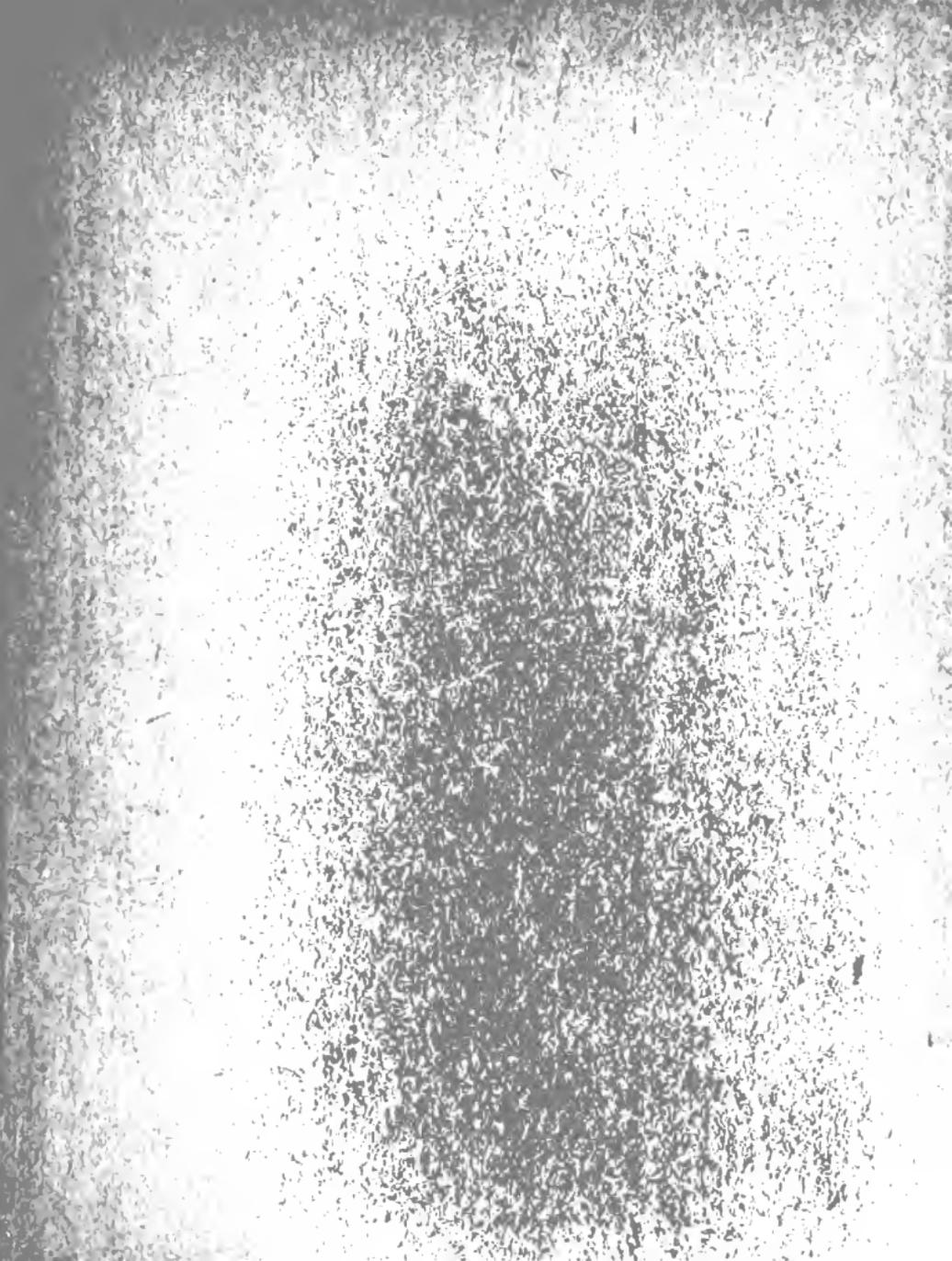
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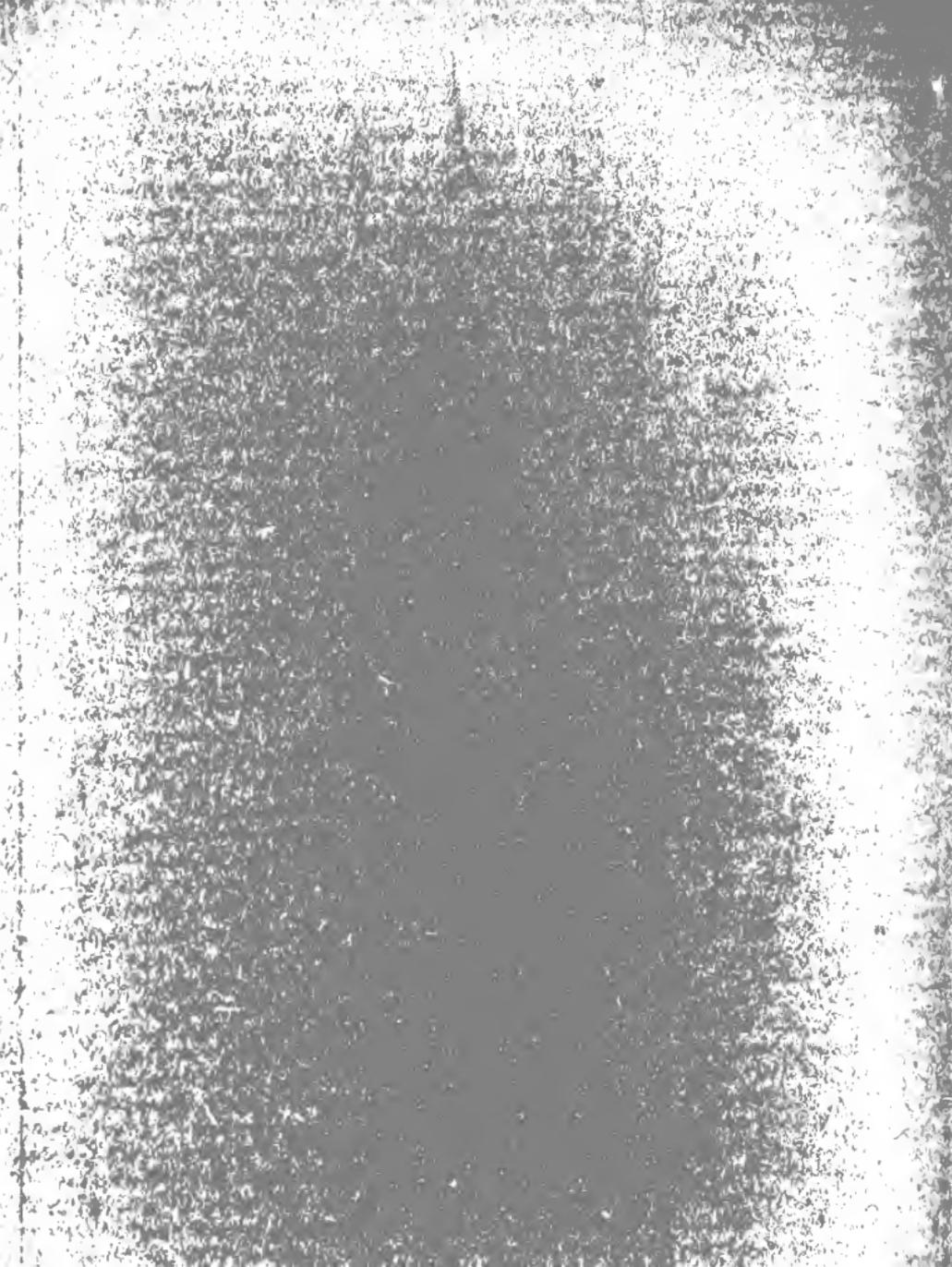
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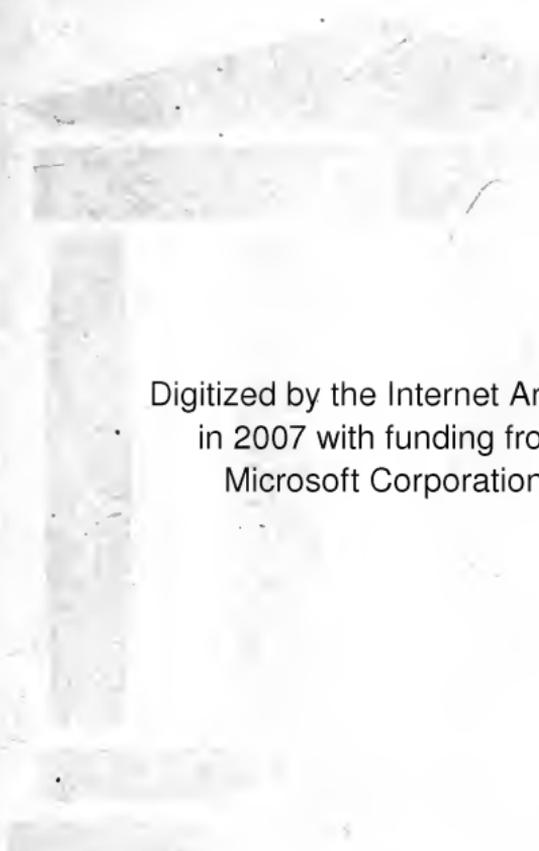
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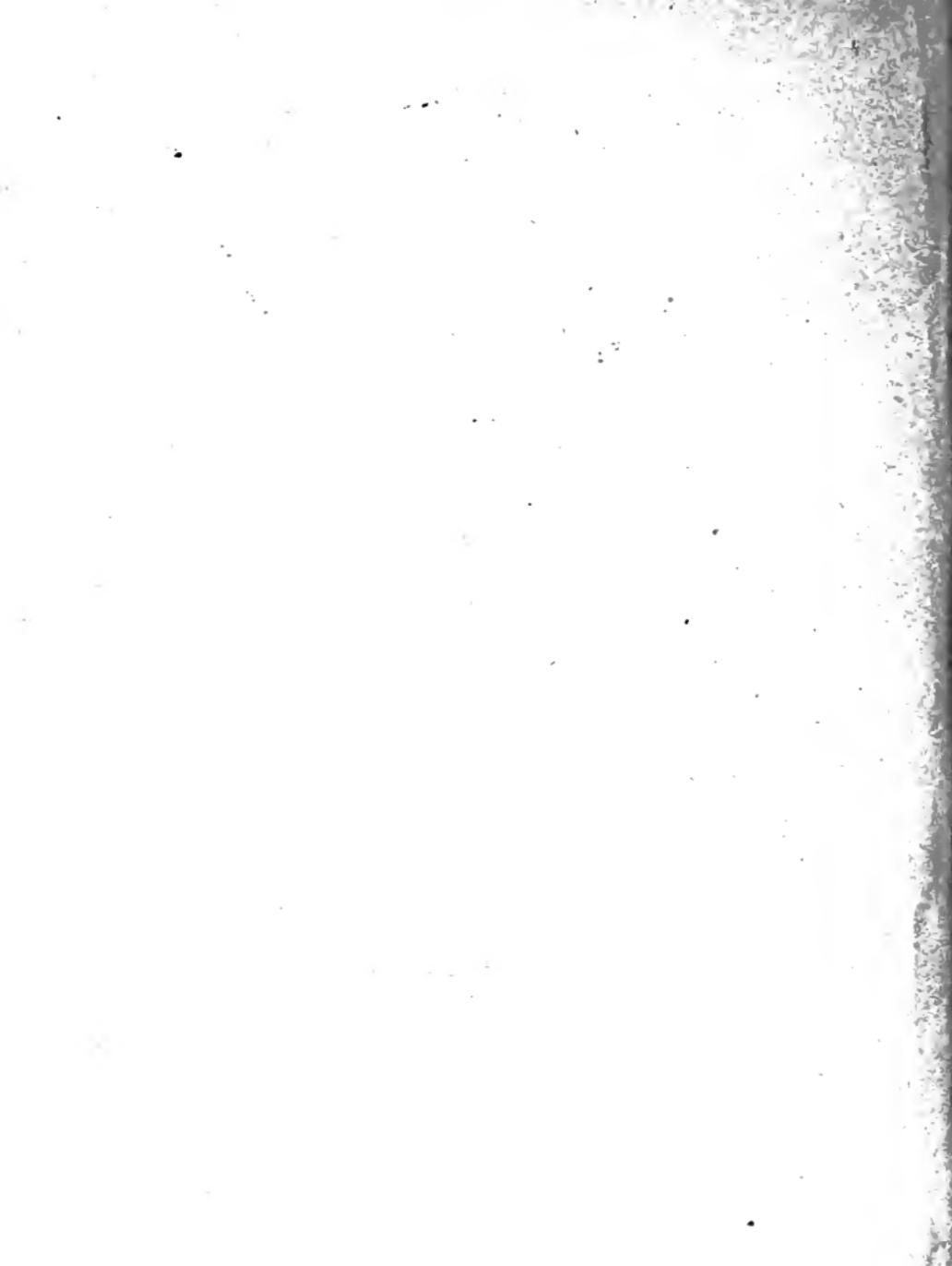
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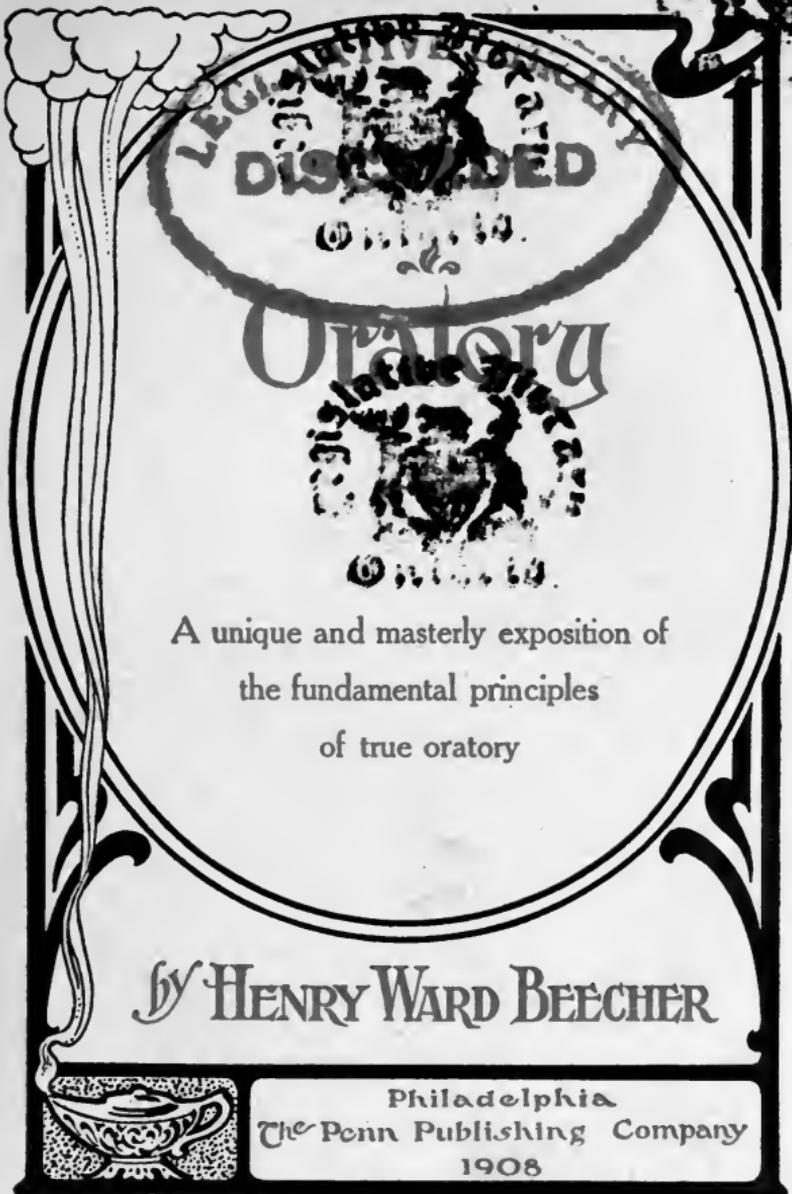


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Oratory

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY
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 ORATORY

A unique and masterly exposition of
 the fundamental principles
 of true oratory

by **HENRY WARD BEECHER**

Philadelphia
 The Penn Publishing Company
 1908



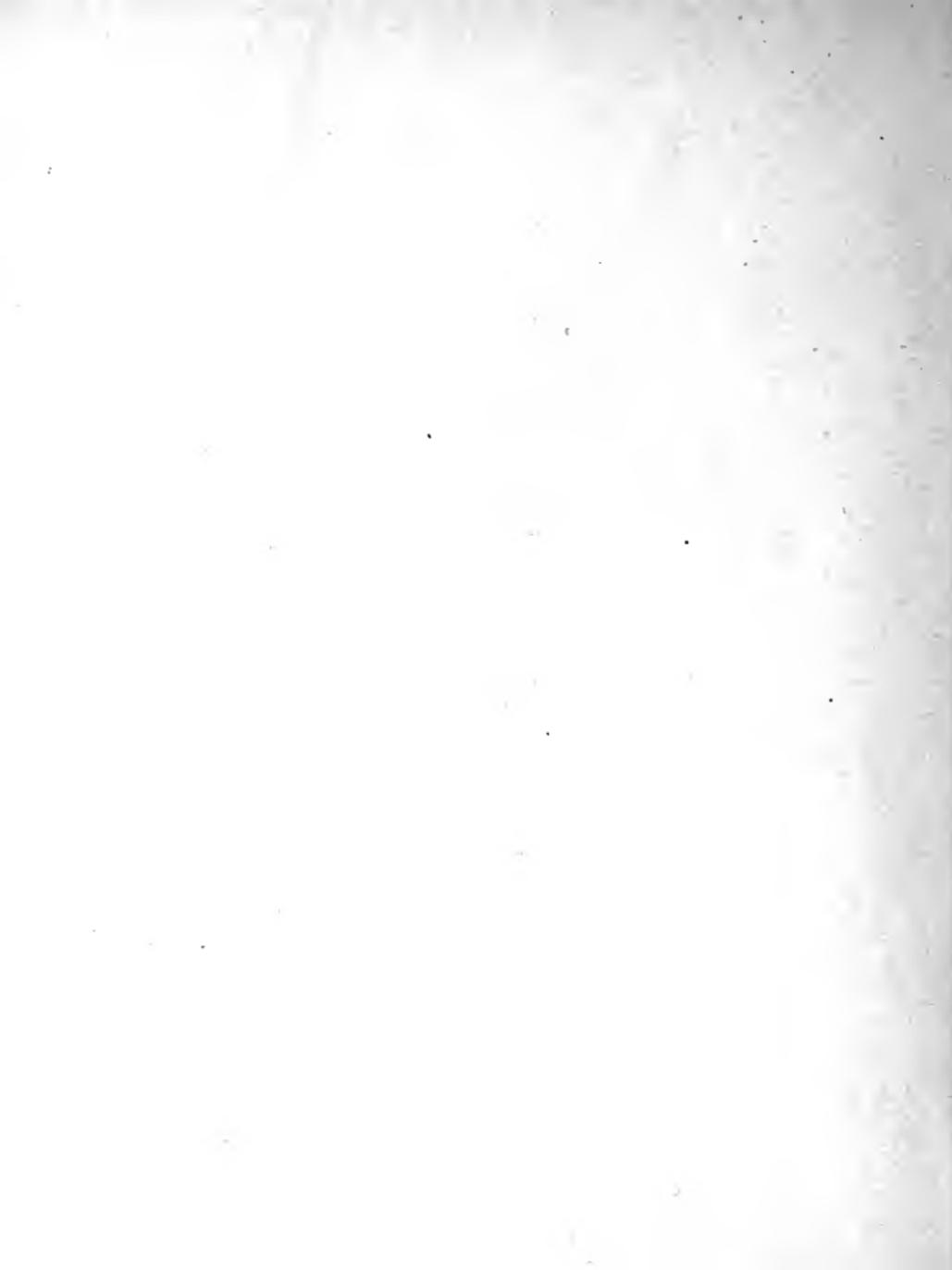
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ORATORY

AN ORATION

BY

REV. HENRY WARD BEECHER

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

NATIONAL SCHOOL OF ELOCUTION AND ORATORY UPON THE OCCASION
OF ITS THIRD ANNUAL COMMENCEMENT, HELD IN THE AMERICAN
ACADEMY OF MUSIC, PHILADELPHIA, MAY 29, 1876



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ORATION

BY

REV. HENRY WARD BEECHER.

I congratulate myself always, for the privilege of appearing before a Philadelphia audience—intelligent, sympathetic, appreciative; but never more than now, when the audience is assembled both to behold, and to bear witness to, one of the noblest institutions that could be established in your midst; one of the most needed; and one which I have reason to believe has been established under the inspiration of the highest motives, not only of patriotism in education, but of religion

itself. This city—eminent in many respects for its institutions, and for its various collections which make civilization so honorable—I congratulate, that now, at last, it has established a school of oratory in this central position, equidistant from the South, from the West, and from the North, as a fitting centre from which should go out influences that shall exalt, if not regenerate, public sentiment on the subject of oratory ; for, while progress has been made, and is making, in the training of men for public speaking, I think I may say that, relative to the exertions that are put forth in other departments of education, this subject is behind almost all others. Training in this department is the great want of our day ; for we are living in a land whose genius, whose history, whose institutions, whose people, eminently demand oratory.

There is nothing that draws men more quickly to any centre than the hope of hearing important subjects wisely discussed with full fervor of manhood; and that is oratory—truth bearing upon conduct, and character set home by the living force of the full man. And nowhere, in the field, in the forum, in the pulpit, or in schools, is there found to be a living voice that informs of beauty, traces rugged truth, and gives force and energy to its utterance, that people do not crowd and throng there.

We have demonstrations enough, fortunately, to show that truth alone is not sufficient; for truth is the arrow, but man is the bow that sends it home. There be many men who are the light of the pulpit, whose thought is profound, whose learning is universal, but whose offices are unspeakably dull. They do

make known the truth ; but without fervor, without grace, without beauty, without inspiration ; and discourse upon discourse would fitly be called *the funeral of important subjects !*

Nowhere else is there to be so large a disclosure of what is possible from man acting upon men, as in oratory. In ancient times, and in other lands, circumstances more or less propitious developed the force of eloquence in special instances, or among particular classes. But consider the nature of our own institutions. Consider that nothing can live in our midst until it has accepted its mission of service to the whole people.

Now and then, men, mistaking good sense, speak contemptuously of popularizing learning, and of popularizing science ; but popular intelligence is that atmosphere in which all high scientific truth

and research, and all learning, in its amplest extent, are, by advance in civilization, to find their nourishment and stimulation ; and throughout our land the people demand to know what are the principles of government, what is the procedure of courts, what is the best thought in regard to national policy, what are the ripening thoughts respecting the reformations of the times, what is social truth, what is civil truth, and what is divine truth. These things are discussed in the cabin, in the field, in the court-house, in the legislative hall, everywhere, throughout forty or fifty millions of people. This is in accordance with the nature of our institutions and our customs ; and to the living voice more largely than to any other source are we indebted for the popularization of learning and knowledge, and for motive force,

which the printed page can scarcely give in any adequate measure.

Yet, though this is in accordance with the necessity of our times, our institutions and our customs, I think that oratory, with the exception of here and there an instance which is supposed to be natural, is looked upon, if not with contempt, at least with discredit, as a thing artificial; as a mere science of ornamentation; as a method fit for actors who are not supposed to express their own sentiments, but unfit for a living man who has earnestness and sincerity and purpose.

Still, on the other hand, I hold that oratory has this test and mark of divine providence, in that God, when He makes things perfect, signifies that He is done by throwing over them the robe of beauty; for beauty is the divine thought of excel-

lence. All things, growing in their earlier stages, are rude. All of them are in vigorous strength, it may be; but not until the blossom comes, and the fruit hangs pendant, has the vine evinced for what it was made. God is a God of beauty; and beauty is everywhere the final process. When things have come to that, they have touched their limit.

Now, a living force that brings to itself all the resources of imagination, all the inspirations of feeling, all that is influential in body, in voice, in eye, in gesture, in posture, in the whole animated man, is in strict analogy with the divine thought and the divine arrangement; and there is no misconception more utterly untrue and fatal than this: that oratory is an artificial thing, which deals with baubles and trifles, for the sake of making bubbles of pleasure for transient effect on mer-

curial audiences. So far from that, it is the consecration of the whole man to the noblest purposes to which one can address himself—the education and inspiration of his fellow-men by all that there is in learning, by all that there is in thought, by all that there is in feeling, by all that there is in all of them, sent home through the channels of taste and of beauty. And so regarded, oratory should take its place among the highest departments of education.

I have said that it is disregarded largely; so it is; and one of the fruits of this disregard is that men fill all the places of power—how? With force misdirected; with energy not half so fruitful as it might be; with sincerity that knows not how to spread its wings and fly. I think that if you were to trace and to analyze the methods which prevail in all

the departments of society, you would find in no other such contempt of culture, and in no other such punishment of this contempt.

May I speak of my own profession, from a life-long acquaintance—from now forty years of public life and knowledge and observation? May I say, without being supposed to arrogate anything to my own profession, that I know of no nobler body of men, of more various accomplishments, of more honesty, of more self-sacrifice, and of more sincerity, than the clergymen of America? And yet, with exceptional cases, here and there, I cannot say that the profession represents eminence: I mean eminence, not in eloquence, but in oratory. I bear them witness that they mean well; I bear them witness that in multitudes of cases they are grotesque; that in multitudes of other

cases they are awkward; and that in multitudes still greater they are dull. They are living witnesses to show how much can be done by men that are in earnest without offices, and without the adjuvants of imagination and of taste, by training; and they are living witnesses also, I think, of how much is left undone to make truth palatable, and to make men eager to hear it and eager to receive it, by the lack of that very training which they have despised—or neglected, at any rate.

Or, shall I ask you to scrutinize the manner and the methods that prevail in our courts—the everlasting monotone and seesaw? Shall I ask you to look at the intensity that raises itself to the highest pitch in the beginning, and that then, running in a screaming monotone, wearies, if it does not affright, all that hear it?

Or, shall I ask you to consider the wild way in which speaking takes place in our political conflicts throughout the country—the bellowing of one, the shouting of another, the grotesqueness of a third, and the want of any given method, or any emotion, in almost all of them.

How much squandering there is of the voice! How little is there of the advantage that may come from conversational tones! How seldom does a man dare to acquit himself with pathos and fervor! And the men are themselves mechanical and methodical in the bad way, who are most afraid of the artificial training that is given in the schools, and who so often show by the fruit of their labor that the want of oratory is the want of education.

How remarkable is sweetness of voice in the mother, in the father, in the household! The music of no chorded instru-

ments brought together is, for sweetness, like the music of familiar affection when spoken by brother and sister, or by father and mother.

Conversation itself belongs to oratory. Where is there a wider, a more ample field for the impartation of pleasure or knowledge than at a festive dinner? and how often do we find that when men, having well eaten and drunken, arise to speak, they are well qualified to keep silence and utterly disqualified to speak! How rare it is to find felicity of diction on such occasions! How seldom do we see men who are educated to a fine sense of what is fit and proper at gatherings of this kind! How many men there are who are weighty in argument, who have abundant resources, and who are almost boundless in their power at other times and in other places, but who when in

company among their kind are exceedingly unapt in their methods. Having none of the secret instruments by which the elements of nature may be touched, having no skill and no power in this direction, they stand as machines before living, sensitive men. A man may be as a master before an instrument; only the instrument is dead; and he has the living hand; and out of that dead instrument what wondrous harmony springs forth at his touch! And if you can electrify an audience by the power of a living man on dead things, how much more should that audience be electrified when the chords are living and the man is alive, and he knows how to touch them with divine inspiration!

I advocate, therefore, in its full extent, and for every reason of humanity, of patriotism, and of religion, a more

thorough culture of oratory ; and I define oratory to be *the art of influencing conduct with the truth set home by all the resources of the living man*. Its aim is not to please men, but to build them up ; and the pleasure which it imparts is one of the methods by which it seeks to do this. It aims to get access to men by allaying their prejudices. A person who, with unwelcome truths, undertakes to carry them to men who do not want them, but who need them, undertakes a task which is like drawing near to a fortress. The times have gone by, but you remember them, when, if I had spoken here on certain themes belonging to patriotism which now are our glory, I should have stood before you as before so many castles locked and barred. How unwelcome was the truth ! But if one had the art of making the truth beautiful ;

if one had the art of coaxing the keeper of the gate to turn the key and let the interloping thought come in ; if one could by persuasion control the cerberus of hatred, of anger, of envy, of jealousy, that sits at the gate of men's souls, and watches against unwelcome truths ; if one could by eloquence give sops to this monster, and overcome him, would it not be worth while to do it ? Are we to go on still cudgeling, and cudgeling, and cudgeling men's ears with coarse processes ? Are we to consider it a special providence when any good comes from our preaching or our teaching ? Are we never to study how skillfully to pick the lock of curiosity, to unfasten the door of fancy, to throw wide open the halls of emotion, and to kindle the light of inspiration in the souls of men ? Is there any reality in oratory ? It is all real.

First, in the orator is the man. Let no man who is a sneak try to be an orator. The method is not the substance of oratory. A man who is to be an orator must have something to say. He must have something that in his very soul he feels to be worth saying. He must have in his nature that kindly sympathy which connects him with his fellow-men, and which so makes him a part of the audience which he moves as that his smile is their smile, that his tear is their tear, and that the throb of his heart becomes the throb of the hearts of the whole assembly. A man that is humane, a lover of his kind, full of all earnest and sweet sympathy for their welfare, has in him the original element, the substance of oratory, which is truth, but in this world truth needs nursing and helping; it needs every advantage; for

the underflow of life is animal, and the channels of human society have been taken possession of by lower influences beforehand. The devil squatted on human territory before the angel came to dispossess him. Pride and intolerance, arrogance and its cruelty, selfishness and its greed, all the lower appetites and passions, do swarm, and do hold in thrall the under-man that each one of us yet carries—the man of flesh, on which the spirit-man seeks to ride, and by which too often he is thrown and trampled under foot. The truth in its attempt to wean the better from the worse needs every auxiliary and every adjuvant.

Therefore, the man who goes forth to speak the truth, whether men will hear or whether they will forbear, and goes with the determination that they *shall* hear; the man who carries victory in his

hope; the man who has irrefragible courage—it is not enough that he has in his soul this element, which, though it be despised, is the foundation element, and which comes first by birth, thanks to your father and mother, thanks to the providence that gave you such a father and such a mother, and thanks to the God who inspires it and sanctifies it. With this predisposition and this substance of truth which men need, and which is to re-fashion human life in all its parts, the question arises whether there is need of anything more than gracious culture. Well, so long as men are in the body they need the body. There are some who think they have well-nigh crucified the body. If they have, why are they lingering here below, where they are not useful, and where they are not needed? So long as men touch the ground, and feel their

own weight, so long they need the aptitudes and the instrumentalities of the human body; and one of the very first steps in oratory is that which trains the body to be the welcome and glad servant of the soul—which it is not always; for many and many a one who has acres of thought has little bodily culture, and as little grace of manners; and many and many a one who has sweetening inside has cacophony when he speaks. Harsh, rude, hard, bruising, are his words.

The first work, therefore, is to teach a man's body to serve his soul; and in this work the education of the bodily presence is the very first step. We had almost extinguished the power of the human body by our pulpits, which, in early days, were the sources and centres of popular eloquence such as there was; for men followed the Apocalyptic figure of the

candlestick, the pulpit in the church representing the candlestick, and the minister being supposed to be the light in it. In those days of symbolization everything had to be symbolized; and when a church was built they made a pulpit that was like the socket of a candlestick, and put a man into it; and thus entubbed he looked down afar upon his congregation to speak unto them! Now, what man could win a coy and proud companion if he were obliged to court at fifty feet distance from her? or, what man, pleading for his life, would plead afar off, as through a speaking trumpet, from the second story, to one down below?

Nay, men have been covered up. The introduction of platforms has been thought, on the whole, to be a somewhat discourteous thing. I will tell you, if you will indulge me, a little reminiscence of

my own experience. In the church where I minister there was no pulpit; there was only a platform; and some of the elect ladies, honorable and precious, waited upon me to know if I would not permit a silk screen to be drawn across the front of my table, so that my legs and feet need not be seen. My reply to them was, "I will, on one condition—that whenever I make a pastoral call at your houses you will have a green silk bag into which I may put my legs."

If the legs and feet are tolerable in a saloon, or in a social room, why are they not tolerable on a platform? It takes the whole man to make a man; and at times there are no gestures that are comparable to the simple stature of the man himself. So it behooves us to train men to use the whole of themselves. Frequently the foot is emphasis, and the posture is oftentimes

power, after a word, or accompanying a word; and men learn to perceive the thought coming afar off from the man himself who foreshadows it by his action.

You shall no longer, when men are obliged to stand disclosed before the whole audience, see ministers bent over a desk, like a weary horse crooked over a hitching block, and preaching first on one leg, and then on the other. To be a gentleman in the presence of an audience is one of the first lessons which oratory will teach the young aspiring speaker.

But, beside that, what power there is in posture, or in gesture! By it, how many discriminations are made; how many smooth things are rolled off; how many complex things men are made to comprehend! How many things the body can tongue when the tongue itself cannot well utter the thing desired! The

tongue and the person are to co-operate ; and having been trained to work together, the result is spontaneous, unthought of, unarranged for.

Now, to the real natural man—and the natural man is the educated man; not the thing from which he sprang—how much is to be added! Many a man will hear the truth for the pleasure of hearing it, who would not hear it for the profit of hearing it; and so there must be something more than its plain statement. Among other things, the voice—perhaps the most important of all, and the least cultured—should not be forgotten. How many men are there that can speak from day to day one hour, two hours, three hours, without exhaustion, and without hoarseness? But it is in the power of the vocal organs, and of the ordinary vocal organs, to do this. What multitudes of

men weary themselves out because they put their voice on a hard run at the top of its compass!—and there is no relief to them, and none, unfortunately, to the audience. But the voice is like an orchestra. It ranges high up, and can shriek betimes like the scream of an eagle; or it is low as a lion's tone; and at every intermediate point is some peculiar quality. It has in it the mother's whisper and the father's command. It has in it warning and alarm. It has in it sweetness. It is full of mirth and full of gayety. It glitters, though it is not seen with all its sparkling fancies. It ranges high, intermediate, or low, in obedience to the will, unconsciously to him who uses it; and men listen through the long hour, wondering that it is so short, and quite unaware that they have been bewitched out of their weariness by the charm of a

voice, not artificial, not prearranged in the man's thought, but by assiduous training made to be his second nature. Such a voice answers to the soul, and it is its beating.

Now, against this training manifold objections are made. It is said that it is unworthy of manhood that men should be so trained. The conception of a man is that of blunt earnestness. It is said that if a man knows what he wants to say, he can say it ; that if he knows what he wants to have men do, the way is for him to pitch at them. That seems to be about the idea which ordinarily prevails on this subject. Shoot a man, as you would a rocket in war ; throw him as you would a hand-grenade ; and afterward, if you please, look to see where he hits ; and woe be to those who touch the fragments ! Such appears to be the notion which

many have on this subject. But where else, in what other relation, does a man so reason? Here is the highest function to which any man can address himself—the attempt to vitalize men; to give warmth to frigid natures; to give aspirations to the dull and low-flying; to give purpose to conduct, and to evolve character from conduct; to train every part of one's self—the thinking power; the perceptive power; the intuitions; the imagination; all the sweet and overflowing emotions. The grace of the body; its emphasis; its discriminations; the power of the eye and of the voice—all these belong to the blessedness of this work.

“No,” says the man of the school of the beetle, “buzz, and fight, and hit where you can.” Thus men disdain this culture as though it were something

effeminate ; as though it were a science of ornamentation ; as though it were a means of stealing men's convictions, not enforcing them ; and as though it lacked calibre and dignity.

But why should not this reasoning be applied to everything else ? The very man who will not train his own voice to preach, to lecture, to discourse, whether in the field or in the legislative hall, or in the church, will pay large dues through weary quarters to drill his daughter's voice to sing hymns, and canzonets, and other music. This is not counted to be unworthy of the dignity of womanhood.

“ But,” it is said, “ does not the voice come by nature ? ” Yes ; but is there anything that comes by nature which stays as it comes if it is worthily handled ? We receive one talent that we may make it five ; and we receive five talents that we

may make them ten. There is no one thing in man that he has in perfection till he has it by culture. We know that in respect to everything but the voice. Is not the ear trained to acute hearing? Is not the eye trained in science? Do men not school the eye, and make it quick-seeing by patient use? Is a man, because he has learned a trade, and was not born with it, thought to be less a man? Because we have made discoveries of science and adapted them to manufacture; because we have developed knowledge by training, are we thought to be unmanly? Shall we, because we have unfolded our powers by the use of ourselves for that noblest of purposes, the inspiration and elevation of mankind, be less esteemed? Is the school of human training to be disdained when by it we are rendered more useful to our fellow-men?

But it is said that this culture is artificial; that it is mere posturing; that it is simple ornamentation. Ah! that is not because there has been so much of it, but because there has been so little of it. If a man were to begin, as he should, early; or if, beginning late, he were to addict himself assiduously to it, then the graces of speech, the graces of oratory, would be to him what all learning must be before it is perfect, namely, spontaneous. If he were to be trained earlier, then his training would not be called the science of ostentation or of acting.

Never is a man thoroughly taught until he has forgotten how he learned. Do you remember when you tottered from chair to chair? Now you walk without thinking that you learned to walk. Do you remember when your inept hands wandered through the air toward the candle,

or toward the mother's bosom? Now how regulated, how true to your wish, how quick, how sharp to the touch, are those hands! But it was by learning that they became so far perfected. Their perfection is the fruit of training.

Let one think of what he is doing, and he does it ill. If you go into your parlor, where your wife and children are; you always know what to do with yourself—or almost always! You are not awkward in your postures, nor are you awkward with your hands; but let it be understood that there are a dozen strangers to be present, and you begin to think how to appear well before them; and the result of your thinking about it is that you appear very ill. Where to put your hands, and where to put yourself, you do not know; how to stand or how to sit troubles you; whether to hold up one

hand or the other hand, or to hold both down, or both up, is a matter of thought with you.

Let me walk on the narrowest of these boards upon which I stand, and I walk with simplicity and perfect safety, because I scarcely think of walking; but lift that board fifty feet above the ground, and let me walk on it as far as across this building, and let me think of the consequences that would result if I were to fall, and how I would tremble and reel! The moment a man's attention is directed to that which he does, he does it ill. When the thing which a man does is so completely mastered as that there is an absence of volition, and he does it without knowing it, he does it easily; but when the volition is not subdued, and when, therefore, he does not act spontaneously, he is conscious of what he does, and the conscious-

ness prevents his doing it easily. Unconsciousness is indispensable to the doing a thing easily and well.

Now, in regard to the training of the orator, it should begin in boyhood, and should be part and parcel of the lessons of the school. Grace; posture; force of manner; the training of the eye, that it may look at men, and pierce them, and smile upon them, and bring summer to them, and call down storms and winter upon them; the development of the hand, that it may wield the sceptre, or beckon with sweet persuasion—these things do not come artificially; they belong to man. Why, men think that Nature means that which lies back of culture. Then you ought never to have departed from babyhood; for that is the only nature you had to begin with. But is nature the acorn forever? Is not the oak nature? Is not

that which comes from the seed the best representation of the divine conception of the seed? And as men we are seeds. Culture is but planting them and training them according to their several natures; and nowhere is training nobler than in preparing the orator for the great work to which he educates himself—the elevation of his kind, through truth, through earnestness, through beauty, through every divine influence.

But it is said that the times are changing, and that we ought not to attempt to meddle with that which God has provided for. Say men, “The truth is before you; there is your Bible; go preach the Word of God.” Well, if you are not to meddle with what God has provided for, why was not the Bible sent instead of you? You were sent because the very object of a preacher was to give the truth a living

form, and not have it lie in the dead letter. As to its simplicity and as to its beauty, I confute you with your own doctrine ; for, as I read the sacred text, it is, "Adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour." We are to make it beautiful. There are times when we cannot do it. There are times for the scalpel, there are times for the sword, and there are times for the battle-axe ; but these are exceptional. "Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good to edification" is a standing command ; and we are to take the truth, of every kind, and if possible bring it in its summer guise to men.

But it is said, "Our greatest orators have not been trained." How do you know? It may be that Patrick Henry went crying in the wilderness of poor speakers, without any great training ; I will admit that now and then there are

gifts so eminent and so impetuous that they break through ordinary necessities ; but even Patrick Henry was eloquent only under great pressure ; and there remain the results of only one or two of his efforts. Daniel Webster is supposed in many respects to have been the greatest American orator of his time ; but there never lived a man who was so studious of everything he did, even to the buttons on his coat, as Daniel Webster. Henry Clay was prominent as an orator, but though he was not a man of the schools, he was a man who schooled himself ; and by his own thought and taste and sense of that which was fitting and beautiful, he became, through culture, an accomplished orator.

If you go from our land to other lands ; if you go to the land which has been irradiated by parliamentary eloquence :

if you go to the people of Great Britain ; if you go to the great men in ancient times who lived in the intellect ; if you go to the illustrious names that every one recalls—Demosthenes and Cicero—they represent a life of work.

Not until Michael Angelo had been the servant and the slave of matter did he learn to control matter ; and not until he had drilled and drilled and drilled himself were his touches free and easy as the breath of summer, and full of color as the summer itself. Not until Raphael had subdued himself by color was he the crowning artist of beauty. You shall not find one great sculptor, nor one great architect, nor one great painter, nor one eminent man in any department of art, nor one great scholar, nor one great statesman, nor one divine of universal gifts, whose greatness, if you inquire, you

will not find to be the fruit of study, and of the evolution that comes from study.

It is said, furthermore, that oratory is one of the lost arts. I have heard it said that our struggles brought forth not one prominent orator. This fact reveals a law which has been overlooked—namely, that aristocracy diminishes the number of great men, and makes the few so much greater than the average that they stand up like the pyramids in the deserts of Egypt; whereas, democracy distributes the resources of society, and brings up the whole mass of the people; so that under a democratic government great men never stand so high above the average as they do when society has a level far below them. Let building go up on building around about the tallest spire in this city, and you dwarf the spire, though it stand as high as heaven,

because everything by which it is surrounded has risen higher.

Now, throughout our whole land there was more eloquence during our struggles than there was previously ; but it was in far more mouths. It was distributed. There was in the mass of men a higher method of speaking, a greater power in addressing their fellow-men ; and though single men were not so prominent as they would have been under other circumstances, the reason is one for which we should be grateful. There were more men at a higher average, though there were fewer men at an extreme altitude.

Then it is said that books, and especially newspapers, are to take the place of the living voice. Never ! never ! The miracle of modern times, in one respect, is the Press ; to it is given a wide field and a wonderful work ; and when it shall be

clothed with all the moral inspirations, with all the ineffable graces, that come from simplicity and honesty and conviction, it will have a work second almost to none other in the land. Like the light, it carries knowledge every day round the globe. What is done at St. Paul's in the morning is known, or ever half the day has run around, in Wall Street, New York.. What is done in New York at the rising of the sun, is, before the noontide hour known in California. By the power of the wire, and of the swift-following engine, the papers spread at large vast quantities of information before myriad readers throughout the country; but the office of the papers is simply to convey information. They cannot plant it. They cannot open the soil and put it into the furrow. They cannot enforce it. It is given only to the living man, standing

before men with the seed of knowledge in his hand, to open the furrows in the living souls of men, and sow the seed, and cover the furrows again. Not until human nature is other than it is, will the function of the living voice—the greatest force on earth among men—cease. Not until then will the orator be useless, who brings to his aid all that is fervid in feeling; who incarnates in himself the truth; who is for the hour the living reason, as well as the reasoner; who is for the moment the moral sense; who carries in himself the importunity and the urgency of zeal; who brings his influence to bear upon men in various ways; who adapts himself continually to the changing conditions of the men that are before him; who plies them by softness and by hardness, by light and by darkness, by hope and by fear; who stimulates them or represses them at his

will. Nor is there, let me say, on God's footstool, anything so crowned and so regal as the sensation of one who faces an audience in a worthy cause, and with amplitude of means, and defies them, fights them, controls them, *conquers* them.

Great is the advance of civilization ; mighty are the engines of force, but man is greater than that which he produces. Vast is that machine which stands in the dark unconsciously lifting, lifting—the only humane slave—the iron slave—the Corliss engine ; but he that made the engine is greater than the engine itself. Wonderful is the skill by which that most exquisite mechanism of modern life, the watch, is constructed ; but greater is the man that made the watch than the watch that is made. Great is the Press, great are the hundred instrumentalities and institutions and customs of society ; but

above them all is man. The living force is greater than any of its creations—greater than society, greater than its laws. “The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath,” saith the Lord. Man is greater than his own institutions. And this living force is worthy of all culture—of all culture in the power of beauty; of all culture in the direction of persuasion; of all culture in the art of reasoning.

To make men patriots, to make men Christians, to make men the sons of God, let all the doors of heaven be opened, and let God drop down charmed gifts—winged imagination, all-perceiving reason, and all-judging reason. Whatever there is that can make men wiser and better—let it descend upon the head of him who has consecrated himself to the work of mankind, and who has made himself an orator for man’s sake and for God’s sake.



THE WHITE SUNLIGHT

OF

POTENT WORDS

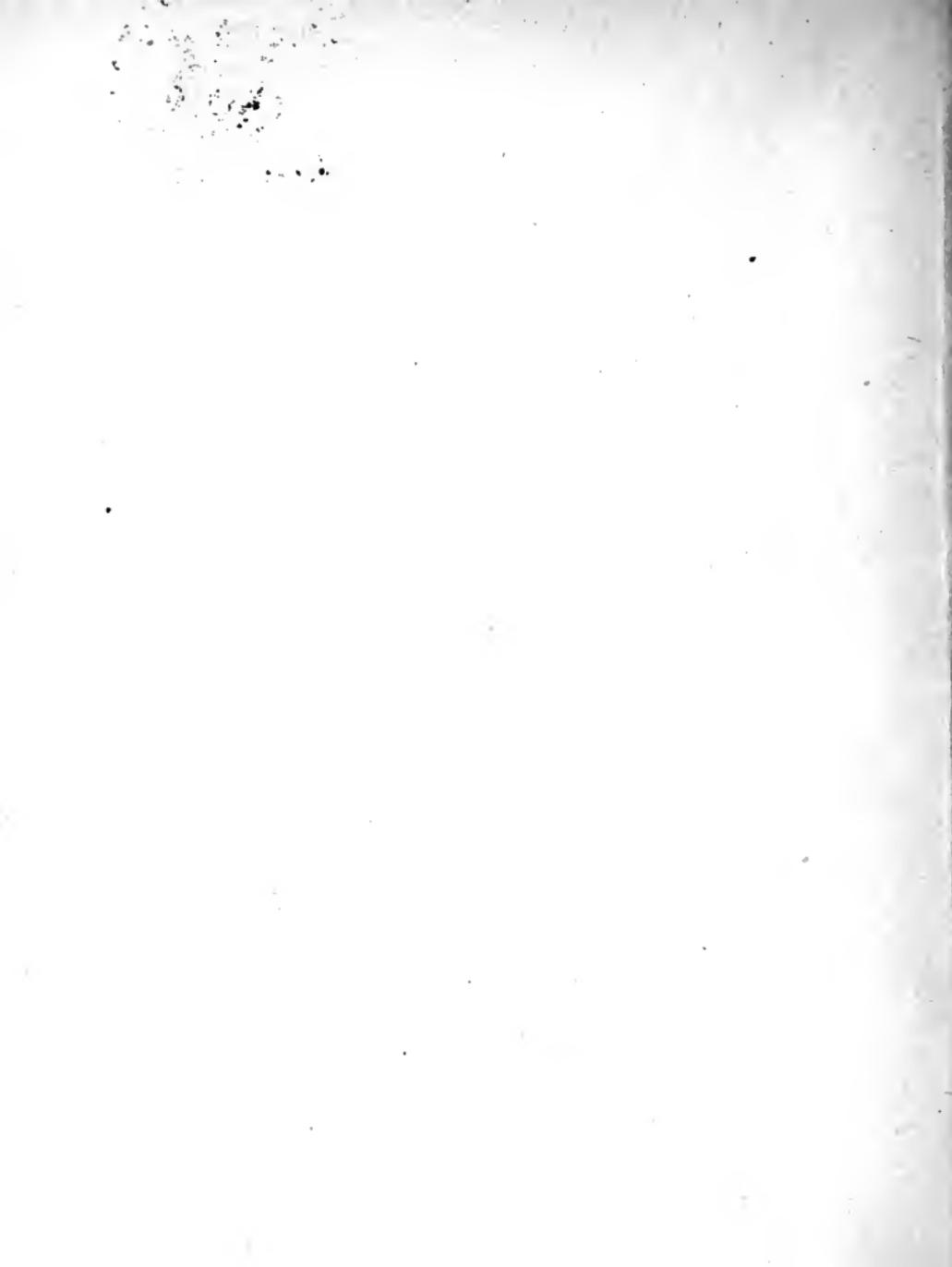
AN ORATION

BY

REV. JOHN S. MACINTOSH, D. D.

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

NATIONAL SCHOOL OF ELOCUTION AND ORATORY UPON THE OCCASION
OF ITS EIGHTH ANNUAL COMMENCEMENT, HELD AT THE AMERICAN
ACADEMY OF MUSIC, PHILADELPHIA, JUNE 14, 1881





THE
WHITE SUNLIGHT
OF
POTENT WORDS

OF the countless acts of kindness and gratifying expressions of esteem that have marked and sweetened my return after long absence to my native city and beloved land, among the very foremost and most flattering must be ranked by me the strongly-expressed invitation to deliver this annual address before Philadelphia's critical sons and cultured daughters.

From this honorable task I, not unnaturally nor surprisingly, at first shrank. Knowing on the one side so well the distinguished and masterly

speakers who, to your pleased profit and to their own enhanced fame, had preceded me upon this stage of perfect speech and purest song, and had made this oration at once a high honor and a toil-fraught duty, and knowing upon the other side even better at once my native inability to stand a peer of such famous forerunners, and also the stern, distracting pressure of clamant and incessant work in this fresh field and amid a thousand thought-troubling circumstances which made adequate preparation for me an insuperable impossibility, I had twice felt it my plain duty to put away from me the delightful labor and the tempting request. But the pleadings of a lady whose worth and work demand most sympathetic consideration, and the persuasions of friends whose words of request are stronger than the commands

of a master, have at last placed me where I shall need all the gracious indulgence which hard-wrought and overtasked men so freely extend to an overstrained brother, and the tender consideration which thoughtful gentlewomen never fail to show to the plain, blunt man who simply tells the thoughts that inly move him.

Yet not of constraint, but willingly, am I here this night. For me it is a pure, strong joy to face my bright and stirring theme, to front this inspiriting throng and forecast the toilsome but triumphant days that shall summon out the powers of these ardent students of the art of speech : the place, the audience, the object of our gathering, are cheering and pleasant ; and I feel that around me is playing a soft and kindly light as I come to speak to you of " The White

Sunlight of Potent Words," longing as I do that soon in our glorious land all our spokesmen shall be true-souled prophets, whose utterances, light-born and light-shedding, shall prove them children of the light, whose luminous words shall chase night and spread day in a hundred fields of thought, and be, therefore, words of power well chosen and perfectly spoken.

This striking phrase, "The white sunlight of potent words," occurs in one of *his* books who was himself no mean sun in the literary world, whose words were truly forces: I mean that freshest and most striking instance of Atavism which our English-speaking nation has ever studied, Carlyle's worshipful portraiture of his strong-souled, true-tongued, clean-handed, God-fearing father. As the stern son depicts so vividly his sterner sire, he

presents him to us as one who loved the white sunlight of exact truth and told his own clear thoughts in potent words. As I read them the terms engraved themselves upon my memory, and as I searched for my subject they flashed back with light and furnished me with the theme desired—one not, perchance, inappropriate to this occasion. These words of Carlyle seemed to me to set forth with sunny vividness and striking freshness exactly what each lover of eloquence, what all earnest, practical, successful speakers, what you in this prosperous, admirably-conducted and influential school of oratory, seek to understand, appreciate, and acquire—the *prophet's secret*, the strength and beauty of thoughtful, cultured, impressive, and impulsive speech. Of speech, I say, the might and magic of the spoken soul ; not scripture,

the written soul; for scripture—that is, writing—is at the best but the precious and splendid artifice to embalm thought and perpetuate some silent emblems of the once-active spirit-life; but speech, hot, glowing, fresh-born, fire-kindling speech, that indeed is more than kingly power: “the tongue is the glory of man.” O precious, awful power wherewith we may yield high glory to God and minister grace and good to men! how shall I make this sublime gift serve its destined ends, change its grand possibility into glorious potency? how shall I perfect into a true servant of my fellows and an acceptable sacrifice to my Maker this divine gift? how shall I find, fashion, fling forth those winged words that prove my heavenly origin—those arrows of the soul that, tipped with fire and swifter than lightning, slay the monsters of

wrong ; those spirit-waves, living and life-giving, that break fresh out of the sea of life and roll onward and upward till they strike upon the footstool of my listening Lord ?

How shall I attain to this the one true ideal of a true spokesman ? By making speech—and only by making speech—a revelation of realities ; a revelation exact, reliable, challenging tests the keenest, eyes the strongest. Such revelation is light, for light is that which makes manifest ; and the grace, the grandeur, the glory of speech is the manifestation of truth to the creatures of conscience. Such manifestation of truth, clean, exact, luminous, is light—yes, white light ; and that is the very life and essence of the highest eloquence and the truest oratory.

Days there are in autumn when the

air seems to have been filtered through some pure fleecy medium and made absolutely dry; when the light is wholly colorless, with an all-penetrating, razor-like keenness in it; when the sun pours down beams from which, like his Master's sight, nothing is hidden; then all things stand out sharply cut, fully unfolded, exactly known, in the white light. Such light, such revelation, is the ideal of eloquence; with it we have the very life and essence of this in many respects highest of the fine arts.

There is, or ought to be, a soul in speech.

As in ourselves we have three great parts—life, form, action, or, in other words, essence, embodiment, exercise—so in oratory there is the essence, or the substance, or the throbbing, thrilling, informing life; and then there is the

expression, the embodiment, in the appropriate harmonious forms of actual utterance; and then there is the exercise, the action, of the whole man, wherein lies the witchery, the spell, of speech.

I. THE ESSENCE OR SUBSTANCE OF ELOQUENCE.

Here, as so often, a false start is ruin, but well begun is half ended. Start with the true substance, seek first the strength of speech—which is truth, reality—and you will in due time, because loving truth, add beauty, grace, and sweetness. But foolishly reverse the order—start with, think first of, aim chiefly after, beauty—and you will never reach the highest beauty, and utterly miss strength. It is the voice, therefore, not only of a holy morality, but

also of high reflective art, of a really noble, resistless eloquence, that falls upon our ear as we catch the old words, clarion-like and commanding: Speak ye every man truth with his neighbor.

Search the eloquence of the past for the secret of its great strength, and you will find truth—truth which to this very hour makes the manly yet skillful pleadings of Judah for the suspected Benjamin before the disguised Joseph, the swelling periods of Moses, the blunt, soldier-like sentences of Joshua, the lightning-flashes of Nathan's attack on David, the scathing irony of Elijah, the comforting words of Isaiah, the deep-toned voice of Peter, the gleaming utterances of Paul, and the seraphic teachings of John thrill and charm and enchain us.

Search, ye that would know the secret

of eloquence, and ye shall find truth to be the strength of the great classic speakers—truth, which Demosthenes, master of orators, flung as well-wrought gold into those still-resounding orations which outring the delighted wonder of the growing centuries and outlast the keenest examination of pitiless criticism. Search, and ye shall find truth, which Plato, Cicero, and Quintilian declare to be the very throbbing, informing life of all abiding and impulsive eloquence; truth, which Theremin makes the very virtue of eloquence; which Shedd in his scholarly, suggestive essays declares to be the very glory of noble speech; which Coleridge and Marsh, with Bacon, affirm to be the force and the fire of eloquence. Search, and you will find that the secret of eloquence is truth—truth, which makes Demosthenes grander than

Æschines, Cicero than Hortensius, Massillon than Bossuet, Burke than Fox, Webster than Hayne, Gladstone than Disraeli. Search, and you shall find truth; truth, which alone can fill the good man, who only, according to Quintilian, has in him the possibility of the orator, with those heart-filling, commanding convictions that create the fiery energy of a Chatham and the resistless sweep of a Mirabeau; truth, which sneaking tricksters fear more than the surging mobs of their furious dupes, and tyrants hate more than the pointed steel of resolute patriots; truth, which free-men love like a mother's voice, and which heroic men crave after more than after Hebe's nectar.

And still, ye students of eloquence, that truth must be the very soul and substance of speech, else there can be no

harmony of intellect, imagination, emotion, and will, by which alone is secured the complex unity of high discourse; still truth must be the life of speech, else there can be no light-flooded reason, hence no healthy throb of strongly-beating heart, and hence no mighty surge of will whose tremendous forces and resistless activities whelm and bury the bad in darksome depths, and raise the good with glorious uplift to rest on eternal heights in victorious safety and reign calm and unchallenged benefactors and saviors of their kind.

How, you ask, shall we grow rich in truth, this royalty of speech? Pursue the path just begun by you; walk forward, earnest, toiling, appreciative students, in the long-drawn and crowded halls and galleries of our own teeming English literature. Study all the writers

you can, but see to it that ye live with, that you love with pure hearts fervently, only the truest of our English seers, those most noble souls who occupy our Olympic heights; and if ye make the truest your models, companions, and masters, you will see and grasp truth, the truth will live within you; then soon the fire will burn and your tongue will speak the gleaming, glowing words that light and warm, that vivify and beautify.

II. THE EXPRESSION OF THE TRUTH.

When the heart loves truth, soon the adequate and appropriate expression will become at once a necessity and an anxiety. Life is ever joined to organization in man's world; spirit is wedded to form; the idea must be embodied. That expression is the work and glory of the

orator's art. The vision of beauty is unveiled before the painter's imaginative soul, the possible angel greets the musing sculptor from the huge rough marble block, witching tones of spirit-voices float around the delighted ears of the rapt musician; and Murillo and Raphael, Angelo and Thorwaldsen, Handel and Beethoven, embody in fitting artistic forms the truth within them, and the world gathers in moved delight and with wondering souls. The eloquent orator is brother in art to the painter, the sculptor, the poet, and the musician; and the proof of his relationship lies in the appropriateness, vividness, exactness, rhythm, and music of his cultured speech, for these constitute the form of beauty given by him to the truth that he has felt or seen or heard. In that clothing of the ethereal essence with the

fair and fitting body lies the art and skill—the painful labor, but the exhilarating joy—of the true prophet.

Teachers of your fellows, you have caught in your lonely hours and reverent thinking soul-ravishing views of purity, righteousness, and charity; or you have heard the thousand varied voices of sky and sea and earth caroling, thundering, whispering their mystic messages to your open hearts and responsive spirit; or, free-born, you have looked upon an avaricious Ahab in his tyrannous meanness, and have watched the confronting Elijah in all the glorious fearlessness of a God-fearing man; or, sympathetic, you have joined in jubilant youth's gleeful gladness, or you have sat in silent sorrow beside the desolate orphan's tear-drenched pillow; or, patriot-souled, you have beheld the

down-trodden country rise in revolutionary wrath, and with her broken fetters smite her despot dead, or you have in mournfulness marked a once-noble nation drifting through the mists of lies and over the treacherous seas of luxury to her eternal ruin; and now there lives within you some part of God's great truth, some fragment of God's great reality. You meditate upon this truth; it burns within you; you must speak it out; and speak it out you will, for you are now fitted to become preachers to men.

What now must ye preachers do? Seek "out acceptable words," and, as ye seek them, turn to our English stores. Seeking to be rich in speech, you will find that in the broad ocean of our English literature there are pearls of great price, our potent English words—words that

are wizards more mighty than the old Scotch magician ; words that are pictures bright and moving with all the coloring and circumstance of life ; words that go down the century like battle-cries ; words that sob like litanies, sing like larks, sigh like zephyrs, shout like seas. Seek amid our exhaustless stores, and you will find words that flash like the stars of the frosty sky, or are melting and tender like Love's tear-filled eyes ; words that are fresh and crisp like the mountain-breeze in autumn, or are mellow and rich as an old painting ; words that are sharp, unbending, and precise like Alpine needle-points, or are heavy and rugged like great nuggets of gold ; words that are glittering and gay like imperial gems, or are chaste and refined like the face of a Muse. Search, and ye shall find words that crush like the

battle-axe of Richard or cut like the scimitar of Solyman; words that sting like a serpent's fang or soothe like a mother's kiss; words that can unveil the nether depths of hell or point out the heavenly heights of purity and peace; words that can recall a Judas, words that reveal the Christ.

How shall we find these pearls of English speech—these words of potency that are to truth what fairest body is to finest soul?

Dig for them as for hidden treasures. The mines are near you, easily wrought, inexhaustible; and these mines—more precious to us than Ophir or Golconda—where you find the rarest jewels of truth set in the splendid forms of perfect words, are the thought-packed treasures, the moving life, the chaste beauty, the

masterly strength, the reverent dignity, of our unsurpassed English literature. What a teeming, varied field of rich terms, of glorious forms, of glowing images, of melodious and majestic speech, of living and palpitating expressions and of exquisitely perfect style, opens to us in that realm where the philosophic voices of Bacon, Hooper, Howe, and Burke, where the laughing, satirical, cutting tones of Butler, Dryden, and Swift, where the crackling wit of Goldsmith, Stern, and Lamb, where the homely greetings of old Father Chaucer, the sweet songs of Spenser, the manly teachings of Bunyan, the terse Saxon of South, the polished periods of Pope and Addison, the alternating pathos and humor of Steele, the solemn musings of Wordsworth, all harmoniously mingle, and where the

seraph-souled Milton and myriad-minced Shakespeare reign unchallenged as twin kings!

Here, then, you have to stir, enrich, control, and cultivate your plastic minds a literature that embodies in the most perfect forms of Elizabethan words the peerless gentleness of a Sydney, the unquailing bravery of a Glanville, the quiet majesty of a Cecil, the dashing hardihood of a Raleigh and the sublime dignity of a Howard. What a rich field of supply is here! Here is a literature that is marked by terseness and clearness, by soberness and majesty, by sweetness and fullness of expression, never surpassed, rarely equalled. Here you have for your guidance and enrichment as speakers a field of literature marked in one department by the pureness, thoroughness, and calmness of the sage

who loves rich, deep, but strongly-ruled speech, and shuns with holy scorn all strain after the startling or striking; a literature marked in another department by the white glow of fiery zeal, the rapid rush of the dauntless will, and by the passionate, piercing cry of the deeply-stirred but despairing seer; a literature marked in another department by short, sharp sentences, by pointed antitheses, striking outbursts, flashing images. This is the literature that presents to you the gathered wealth of the English tongue; and yet this vast and noble library into which I would introduce you, far from exhausting, only half reveals, the marvelous riches of that language whose inexhaustible stores and manifold resources scarcely one amid a thousand speakers ever more than touches. Before us stands a grand instrument of countless

strings, of myraid notes and keys, and we are content with some few hundreds, and these not the purest, richest, deepest, sweetest. If you would be strong of speech, master more of these notes; let your vocabulary be rich, varied, pure, and proportionate will be your power and attractiveness as speakers. I would have you deeply impressed by the force, fullness, and flexibility of our noble tongue, where, if anywhere, the gigantic strength of thought and truth is wedded to the seraphic beauty of perfect utterance. I would have you fling yourselves unhesitatingly out into this great fresh sea, like bold swimmers into the rolling waves of ocean: it will make you healthy, vigorous, supple, and equal to a hundred calls of duty; I would have you cherish sacredly this goodly heritage, won by centuries of English thought and countless lives of

English toil ; I would have you jealous, like the apostle over the Church, over these pure wells of English undefiled. Degrade not our sacred tongue by slang ; defile not its crystal streams with the foul waters of careless speech ; honor its stern old parentage ; obey its simple yet severe grammar ; watch its perfect rhythm, and never mix its blue blood—the gift of noblest sires—with the base puddle of any mongrel race. Never speak half the language of Ashdod and half of Canaan, but be ye of a pure English lip.

Ye who would be real prophets, join the exactest thought to the most exquisite terms. See in the clearest light. Hold with firmest grip exactly what that light reveals, and then, like a Murillo true to his Madonna-vision, and like an Angello true to his ideal Moses, seek

the one exact impression that will be for your hearers the exhaustive embodiment of that unveiled reality.

All this word-hunting, word-choosing, style-marking and mending, means toil, hard and unwearying; but we have started with sacred truth as the substance of speech, and truth beloved ever spurs forward in the race after excellence in expression. As the image of Minerva rising before the Greek, of Isis rising before the Egyptian, of Wisdom before the Hebrew, made each earnest in the portrayal, so Truth rising up within you will move to tireless labor that you may find for her fitting forms; and if words be indeed the vestments of Truth, we shall see that they are exquisitely fitting and worthy of the goddess, for Truth is too dear and sacred to be shown in rags or soiled garments. Conscience

in the seeking means conscience in the speaking of the truth.

Yes, it means conscience, further, in the showing forth of the truth; and here we reach, thirdly, the action that makes the speech living and telling.

III. THE ELOCUTION.

The message is found, acceptable words have clothed it, style and form of expression have been carefully considered: what remains? The elocution that makes the message tell with all possible power. You must now speak out your message with an utterance and an action perfectly befitting the truth and its artistic form, and then you will have made it a resistless potency. *Let the man act out his theme.* These words of light thus spoken, will be conquerors.

Potency links itself with personality—with the living, moving, sympathetically and harmoniously acting man. And if the uttered truth, if the cultured speech, shall have its fullest possible power and win its grandest victories, the man himself—yes, the whole man, throbbing with sympathy and palpitating with life—must be an additional expression, a veritable embodiment, of the truth spoken. The whole man can be made to speak; eyes, face, hands, body, limbs—yes, the very color and breath—can speak; and they shall, and must, be made to speak if there is to be potent speech and perfect oratory. I have studied eager men in a street-wrangle; I have watched playing children in their dramatic imitations of their elders and superiors; I have closely observed for ninety-five minutes a “passion preacher”

of the famous Dominicans ; and with the keenest delight I have beheld what a sympathetic, harmonious speech the pliant and graceful body can make. How expressive of various thought this wondrous form can be ! Who does not know the Frenchman's shrug, the marvelous pliancy of the Italian's fingers, the humorous play of the Irishman's face, the regal dignity of the Spaniard's bow, the sturdy defiance of the Briton's folded arms, the impudent independence of " Young America's " akimbo, and the careless swing of " Jack ashore " ? What meaning in the tottering and feeble steps of an outcast Lear, in the stealthy footfall of a jealous Othello, in the resolute stride of a defiant Macbeth, and in the slow, hesitating motion of a broken-hearted Ophelia ! How easily and quickly the hands will reveal the sus-

picious thoughts of Hamlet watching the conscience-stricken King, show the wild despair of the blood-stained Lady Macbeth, tell the pleading pathos of Milton's Eve, the tender clasp of a mother's love or the imperious repulse of righteous wrath! How quickly eyes and face will tell either the scathing flash of hate or pity's melting mood! The whole man can thus be made to speak with harmonious appropriateness and graceful force. But if so, this whole man must be taught, trained, exercised, till, his native faults removed, his native excellences developed, the orator is unconsciously artistic in his action and artistically unconscious of his action. Diligent teaching and patient perseverance in study and in practice are to this important end absolutely indispensable.

Joined to this expressive play of fea-

ture and of form must be the well developed, highly-exercised, carefully-educated power of a trained and well-ruled voice. Nothing to the speaker so important as a flexible, well-modulated, untiring, full-compassed voice; and nothing more than the voice repays care and cultivation. No carelessness as to articulation or accentuation should be for one moment tolerated by the honest student of this splendid art. In articulation strive to unite strength and beauty—the strength of consonantal distinctness and accurate pronunciation with the beauty of the vowel's roundness, fullness, and sweetness. Strive that your speech betray you not, but be cosmopolitan in your pronunciation and intonation. Seize the special strength and the special beauty of special lands—the potent gutturals and well-trilled

r's of Germany and Scotland, the deep chest-voice and manly organ-notes of burly England, the soft, wooing sweep of the Italian's vowels, the clear, ear-catching syllabification of the Spaniard, the crisp notes of the Frenchman, and the Norseman's consonantal power. Aim at a cultured, varied speech which shall combine and harmonize the billowy roll of the cultivated and traveled Irishman, the low cadences and lute-like softness of the high-bred English girl, and the clear, exact, sharp rhythmic tones of our own educated countrywomen, and you have gained an utterance that will sway by its strength and woo and captivate by its sweetness. I plead earnestly for the careful and sacred conservation of the old classic, round-toned speech of cultured Philadelphians, which, with that of Stamford, Inverness, and Boston,

has ever seemed to me the perfection of spoken English.

Would you know what is perfect in action, study the finest statuary and the truest painting; and carefully mark how a Milton or a Shakespeare depicts his varied characters in varied moods. Would you know what is perfect in tone, study music; train your own ear to the nice discriminations; hear and critically watch the most finished speakers who have made an honest study of this most difficult but most delightful art.

All this excellence demands work continuous and conscientious. And why not give yourselves hard work? Whoso takes up voluntarily the position of a public teacher is summoned by the imperial voice of Duty to give his best thoughts in their best form to that public whom he asks to listen to him, and

therefore he should toil to make his speech forceful through truth like the flooding sea, fresh and attractive in its beauty of form like the early dew.

Make, then, ye ingenuous youth, ye ardent students of this wondrous power and high art of the eloquent orator—make, ye richly-blessed and deeply-responsible children of our grand republic—make truth your first aim both as to matter and as to manner. Remember that speech of truth and truth in speech is the very life-blood of republics. Search the histories of the vanished democracies of classic or mediæval days, and a thousand facts will start up, large-bodied and clear-voiced, to testify that in the breezy hours when truth was dearly loved, boldly told and treasured more than gleaming gems, Freedom's house, rock-bound, defied

every storm; and crowding proofs, shameful and sickening, declare that riot, rottenness, and ruin came when the truth was lost, and the lie, albeit fair-faced, smooth-tongued, glittering in garb, triumphed. Children of this grand Commonwealth, remember that speech without the salt of truth is a pestilent poison, but that speech strong in reality, grand through truth, is a tree of life whose leaves are for the healing of the nation. And we of all folks must have such speech. Peoples there may be who, to use Shakespeare's words, are content to wallow among the lily-beds of sweetness, but sons of Pym and Hampden, of Grattan and Flood, of Knox and Melville, of Luther and Zwingle, must climb the steep mountain-side, and stand in the clear mid-air, and bathe in the pure white light, and rejoice in

the full breeze—yea, even stormy wind
—of reality and truth.

Workers for a splendid republic, which is—if ever one on earth justified Hobbes's definition of a republic—an aristocracy of orators, ye are passing out from your studies to be leaders in this aristocracy which has produced its kings like Patrick Henry and Clay and Webster. Remember, teachers of America's Anglo-Saxon youth, pleaders before America's Anglo-Saxon bench, poets for America's Anglo-Saxon hearts, preachers to America's Anglo-Saxon congregations, leaders of America's Anglo-Saxon world—remember that truth, clothed in cultured, graceful, well-spoken speech, will alone master and mold, will alone satisfy and charm, will alone uphold and advance that splendid, willful, richly-gifted, keenly-sensitive folk with whom

ye have to do. Be it yours, then, to resolve, aim, labor, that with intellect aflame, heart aglow, will astir, your whole being alive and active, ye will speak out sweetly, gracefully, strongly, that truth God shall lend to you; and then ye shall be burning and shining lights, symbols and servants of Him who was the Light of the world and spake as never did man.



THE PLACE OF THE IMAGINATION
IN
THE ART OF EXPRESSION

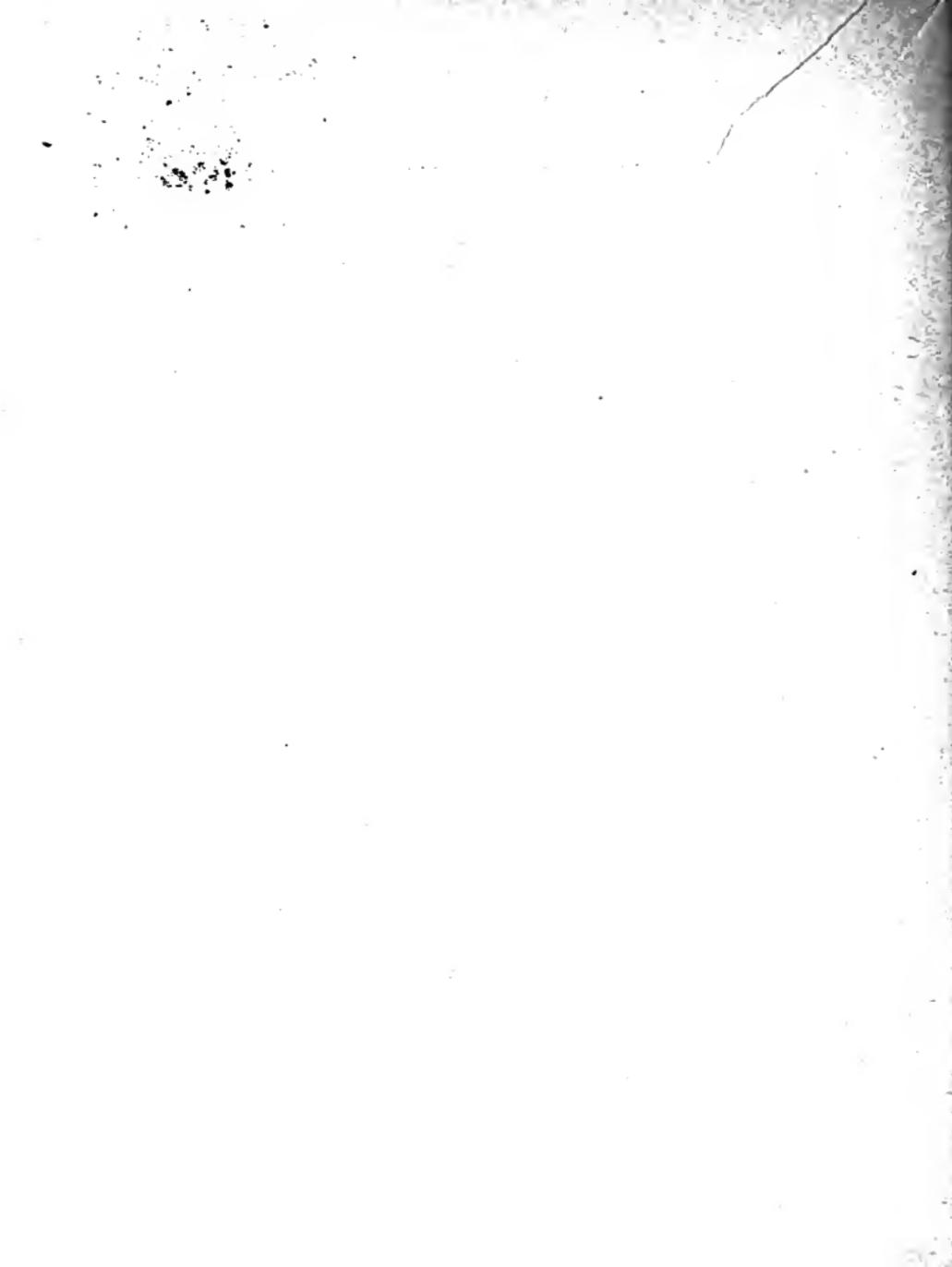
AN ORATION

BY

REV. A. J. F. BEHREND, D. D.

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

NATIONAL SCHOOL OF ELOCUTION AND ORATORY UPON THE OCCASION
OF ITS FOURTEENTH ANNUAL COMMENCEMENT, HELD AT THE
AMERICAN ACADEMY OF MUSIC, PHILADELPHIA, JUNE 7, 1887





THE PLACE OF THE IMAGINATION

IN

THE ART OF EXPRESSION

IT has not been an easy matter for me to determine what niche the invited speaker of this anniversary gathering is expected to fill. There is to be a graduating class; am I to give them words of parting counsel, in the hope that if I acquit myself creditably I may find myself the fortunate recipient of a diploma? There is to be a prize contest; am I called here to grapple with these athletes who have been under training for months? It occurs to me that you can have a brilliant foreground only by having a dull and heavy background, and so you craftily ask us to come here and pose as specimens of neglected

training, that we may feel heartily ashamed of ourselves, while you glory in your superior attainments.

Now I must beg to decline in advance entering the list of oratorical exhibition, or occupying a professional attitude. If you need anything more in the line of teaching, I beg to refer you to a little volume recently published, in one of whose brief chapters the whole question of oratory is discussed with great freshness and vigor. The book I speak of is *English as She is Taught*; and here are some morsels of its wisdom: "Elocution is opening the mouth wide open." "We should always breathe with the muscles of the diaphragm unless we have catarrh or a cold in the head." "Vowel sounds are made by keeping the mouth wide open, and consonant sounds by keeping it shut." "Force is more loudness

sometimes than others." "Emphasis is putting more distress on one word than another." "Breathing is very good for reading, for when you are reading you can't breathe at all, and so it is good to breathe a good deal before." That will do. I might as well try to paint a sun-beam as to improve upon these suggestions. Under existing circumstances I have deemed discretion the better part of valor, and I shall invite you to join me in a little side-excursion, where the professional lines will not cross our path.

Language is not the only form in which man expresses his thoughts. Architecture, sculpture, painting, and instrumental music must be added to the catalogue. The tomb is a meditation. The Gothic cathedral is a prayer in stone. The glowing canvas is a sermon. The

flute and harp and violin and organ move us to tears and laughter. These are forms of expression which the imagination creates and fills with meaning, and whose message can be understood only by a responsive fancy. Is language an exception? It has three forms—the written, crystallizing in literature, in prose and poetry; the spoken, illustrated in conversation, reading, and oratory; and the acted, all that is included in gesture, the muscular movements of the head, hands, and feet. Are any of these departments independent of the imagination, so that perfection can be attained in them by attention purely to technique? Rules alone, every one admits, will not make the architect, the sculptor, the painter, the musician; though genius never ventures, in its boldest flights, to ignore the sanctity of law. But this per-

vasive dominion of law is only the encompassing atmosphere within which fancy spreads its wings and soars aloft. Its lines are the bands and traces within which genius does its work, not the secret and source of its energy. Hence we call architecture, sculpture, painting, music—*fine arts*, because the skill which is chiefly concerned in them is that of the imagination; nor will any one doubt that poetry belongs to the same class. Here the imagination lays claim to one department of language, and it will be found difficult to draw the line where its sovereignty ends. The simple truth is that language, whether written, spoken, or acted, is forcible and effective only when it is the instrument of a living and fruitful fancy.

But I must hasten to state what I mean by the Imagination, and to vindi-

cate for it this high dignity. I understand by it that energy which the mind possesses in creating, from the materials of its knowledge, ideal forms of beauty and excellence. The primary form of intellectual life is perceptive or cognitive, either by means of the senses or by introspection. The soul and the world, with the basic reality underlying and uniting both, provide for us all the materials of our knowledge. I have a knowledge of myself, and I have a knowledge of the world, and these are the media through which the Living God reveals Himself to my inquiring spirit.

I do not stop with fleeting impressions, chasing each other over the field of consciousness as do the shadows of clouds over mountain and vale. The mind of man has a registering and retentive

power, which we call memory, but whose philosophy baffles us. Neither the physiologist nor the psychologist has succeeded in showing where or how the registry is kept, or by what means it is preserved. No less marked and marvelous is the power which the mind has of availing itself of the contents of this voluminous registry, making its treasures subservient to its requirements, recalling them at will or under the pressure of some great emergency.

And this power of reproduction is itself under the guidance of a higher energy, which selects and combines, creating the ideal types that dominate life no less than art. The mind is something more than a photographic apparatus, realistically reproducing the ever-shifting panorama of events. It is an artist, using these crude materials of perception in the crea-

tion of ideal forms; it is an architect, hewing the rough boulders into shapes of beauty, and building them up into massive and graceful structures. And this artistic, architectonic power of the mind, a faint reflex of the creative energy of the Divine Mind, flinging the radiance of an ideal world over the world of sense, is the philosophic or poetic imagination. Are there "tongues in trees, books in the running brooks, sermons in stones, and good in every thing"? The camera of vision does not disclose them. Their music does not fall upon mortal ears. These are purely mental intuitions, a poetic drapery which the mind weaves upon its own looms. Is all this deceptive and vain? Do we play with nature and life, as children amuse themselves with dolls, dressing up the naked, homely facts in the rags and scraps and gaudy

tinsel of our own fancy? So some tell us, and summon us to reduce all thought to the level of a crude realism; to be content in science, literature, art, and religion with simple description. The ideal is a delusion; the visible is the only reality. Beauty, truth, and goodness are only names, convenient for classification, baseless in fact. All things are equally fair; there is nothing ugly. All things are equally true; there is nothing false. All things are equally good; there is no sin. The things that we see are the only measure of existence; the only standard of excellence.

Now, I need not stop to show at length that such a view would rob civilization of its choicest treasures, and reduce our calling to the dignity of making mud-pies. Poetry and fiction must become

commonplace and grossly realistic. Zola must supplant Milton and Walter Scott and even George Eliot, for the power of George Eliot is in her dominating, emotional idealism. Art must leap from heaven to earth, and henceforth deal only with a faultless technique, an exact reproduction on canvas and in marble of what the eyes reveal. There must be no prudery, no intervention of false modesty; the greatest artist is simply the most accurate photographer. Conversation must be content with the gossip of the street, and employ its powers in the faithful portraiture of domestic and social scandal. Ethics and religion must be relegated to the limbo of outgrown superstitions. The land of promise is certainly not one that flows with milk and honey. The prospect is dreary enough, and many

will hesitate to take up the line of march into this paradise, where all ideals are ostracized and disinherited.

But the mind will not consent to be robbed of its power and heritage. It will continue to survey and people its ideal universe. Not as if the ideal is hostile to the real, or independent of it; but because the real is fully understood only under the light of the ideal. The seen and the unseen are not two spheres, removed from each other by an infinite distance, or touching each other only at a single point; they are overlapping circles with the same centre, whence the ideal sweeps the wider and the universally inclusive circumference. The ideals which the mind creates are not the product of an empty fancy, but the emergent revelation of eternal verities. There is truth in Plato's notion that what we see is only

an imperfect copy of an eternal idea, pre-existent and immortal ; and in the doctrine of Malebranche, that the mind sees all things in God. Light streams down upon the soul of man from above, as truly as it impinges upon the membrane of the retina. Sensation is not our only source of knowledge. Kant settled the great debate by showing that the notions of space and time and cause have their birth in the mind, and are not imported into it from without. The mind has a truly creative energy. It is not a white sheet of paper, receiving only passive impressions ; it sallies forth as an interpreter under the laws of thought that are inherent in its own constitution. It reads the visible in the light of the invisible ; it discerns the ideal behind the face of the real.

The imagination alone has made pure

mathematics possible. Its lines and curves are the ideal forms of empty space. Nature has neither perfect lines nor perfect angles nor perfect circles. These are purely mental products, ideal existences, to which nothing visible exactly corresponds; and, what is more, man under the guidance of these idealized things can produce more perfect specimens of each and of all than any which nature exhibits.

Nor can science do its work without the service of the imagination. It proceeds from observation to classification, and in so doing at once introduces and makes dominant a purely mental concept. The individual plant or animal is classed under the type to which it belongs; and types are simply ideal forms. There is no typical rose, no typical tree, no typical horse. The type is a purely

mental product, formed by analysis, comparison, and combination. It is the creature of the imagination, by reference to which the individual is measured and judged.

Science is no less imaginative than art, poetry, and theology. It deals with ideal forms. And therefore it is that the mere copyist never satisfies the artistic demand. The mind sees more than the photograph, and therefore demands more. We do not want the unreal, but we want the real idealized. You never saw such faces as those of Raphael's Madonnas; you never saw such forms as those which Phidias and Michael Angelo carved into marble; you never saw such groups as those of Correggio and Titian. These are the ideals of beauty and strength, and when art abandons the ideal it offends and degrades the æsthetic taste.

The charm and the power of literature are in the ideals which it creates, as in Milton's *Paradise Lost*, in Dante's *Inferno*, and in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. The true poet is always a philosopher, who makes nature and life radiant with the glow and the glory of an invisible world. You never heard men speak, you never saw them act, as they do in Shakespeare's dramas. There is real life and movement; but the reality is intensified, because idealized. The figures are only the drapery of the thought; the good is shown at its best, and the bad at its worst. The power of such a book as *Letters from Hell* is in the keen, calm, incisive, exhaustive analysis with which it probes the recesses of a living and accusing conscience.

Love lives in the imagination. We say it is blind because it sees "Helen's

beauty on the brow of Egypt." But love sees more than the receding brow ; its eyes are on the heart whose radiance floods the dusky face. Every man's mother is, or ought to be, the most beautiful of all women to him, because no other woman can ever be to him what she was and is. All this is the work of the imagination, but it is not, therefore, imaginary. The ideal is there, discerned by the mind, and that gives to every physical defect a new and fair perspective. So that we can understand the answer of the Irishman who was laughed at because he loved a cross eyed damsel, when he declared that Katie's eyes were so beautiful that it was no wonder they were " thrying to look into each other."

Such being the imperial rank and scope of the imagination, the idealizing power of the mind, it is entitled to care-

ful cultivation by all who would be masters of the art of expression. Language is the most subtile and plastic of all instruments. Its mastery is the most difficult of all achievements. A faultless pronunciation and a perfect syntax may serve only to expose the poverty that hides behind the purple. I do not undervalue the physiological and the rhetorical training; but there must be something to say, else the saying it well only makes the speaker ridiculous. And not only must there be something to say, but there must be a proper perspective to which the sentences are adjusted. Language is only a means to an end; and the aim of all expression is impression. You wish to describe a scene or narrate an event or tell a story; your end is gained only when you can make your listener see what you have seen or

hear what you have heard. To do that you must be a mental artist. The salient features must be firmly grasped in your own thought, and the lines must be drawn with a steady, rapid hand. There must be no needless digression. You must know what to leave out, for prolixity and wandering will produce inattention and restlessness. You all know of people who act like wet blankets upon a company when they begin to talk, for you can never tell when they will stop nor what they are aiming at. Conversation is a high art, in which perfection and grace can be attained only by those who are intent upon giving it an ideal form.

Do a faultless pronunciation, a studied inflection, and a measured emphasis insure good reading? The tone of the voice is of far greater importance—that

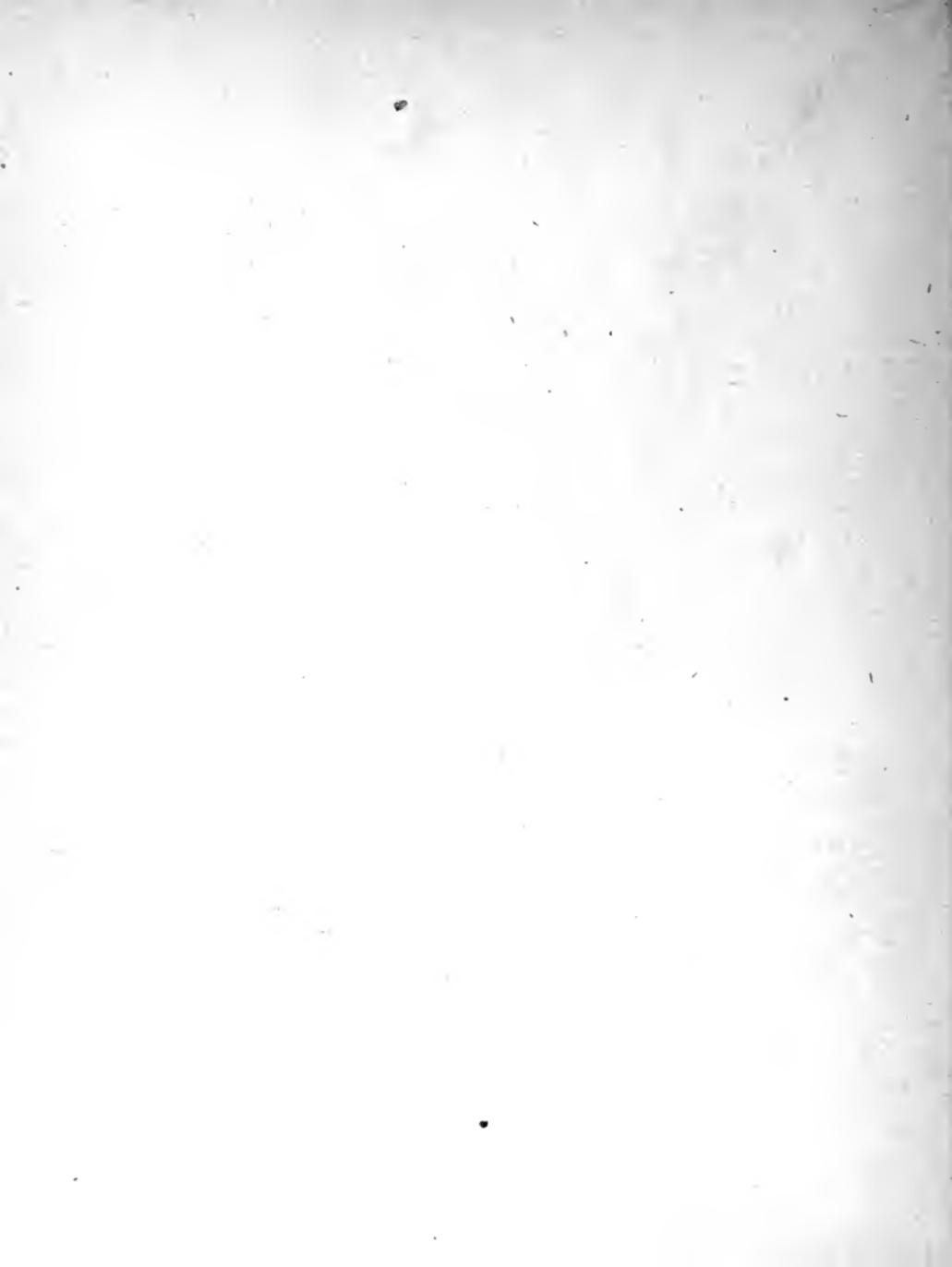
subtile, indescribable, irresistible quality which is born of true and deep emotion, and which passes like an electric shock from the reader to the hearer. The poem, or the page of prose, must first be mastered by the reader, all its hidden recesses of suggestion explored, all its depths sounded, its literary environments reproduced in fancy; and only when the author has been thus idealized can he be successfully interpreted.

Need I add that for the orator or debater this imaging, or grouping power of the mind, is of primary importance? I do not mean that he must think in pictures and talk in similes, for some of the most effective speakers have been men of a simple and unadorned vocabulary. But you can point to no successful advocate or preacher or debater who has not been clear in his analysis, sure

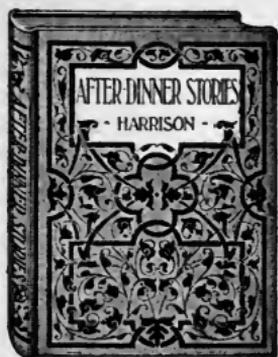
of his thought, definite in his aim, marching toward it along the most direct lines.

Of course, the imagination may be turned to dishonest and dishonorable uses. The tongue may be made to drop manna, making "the worse appear the better reason." At no point is there greater need for the guidance and check of an enlightened and sensitive conscience. The higher the art, the more powerful will be its ministry for good or for evil. The imagination needs the ethical restraints. Our mental pictures must correspond to the truth of things, and in their interpretation to others we must guard against the temptation to vanity. Speech is one of God's noblest gifts to man, and it should be kept firmly to its divine intention—to make plain and radiant the truth, the whole truth,

and nothing but the truth. For if we must part with either beauty or truth, we will hold fast to truth even in a beggar's garb. But beauty and truth are twin-born. He who made the world strong has also made it fair ; and we only follow His example when we fit speech to thought, arranging with artistic skill our apples of gold in finely chased baskets of silver.



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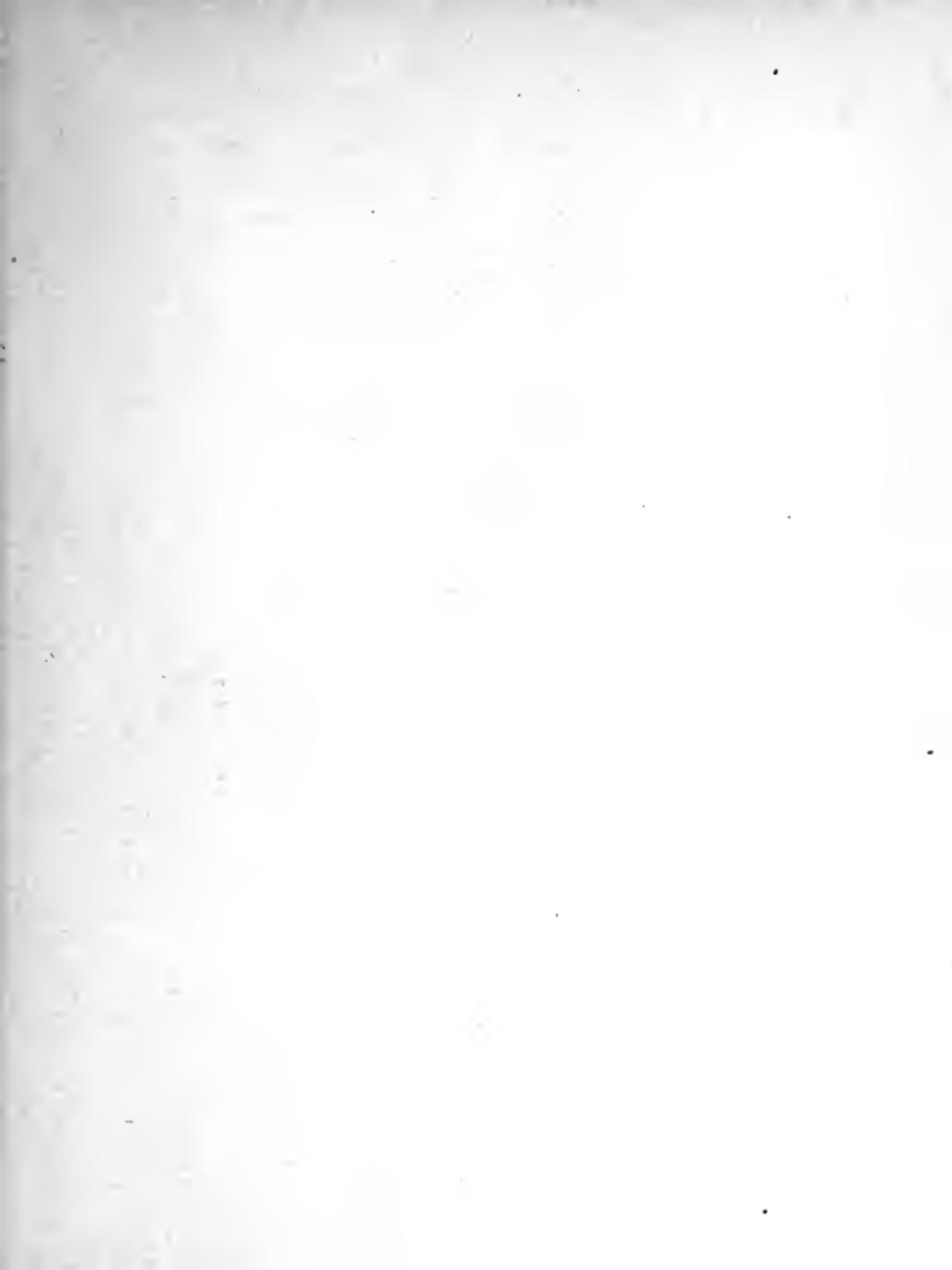
By Edward S. Ellis, A. M.

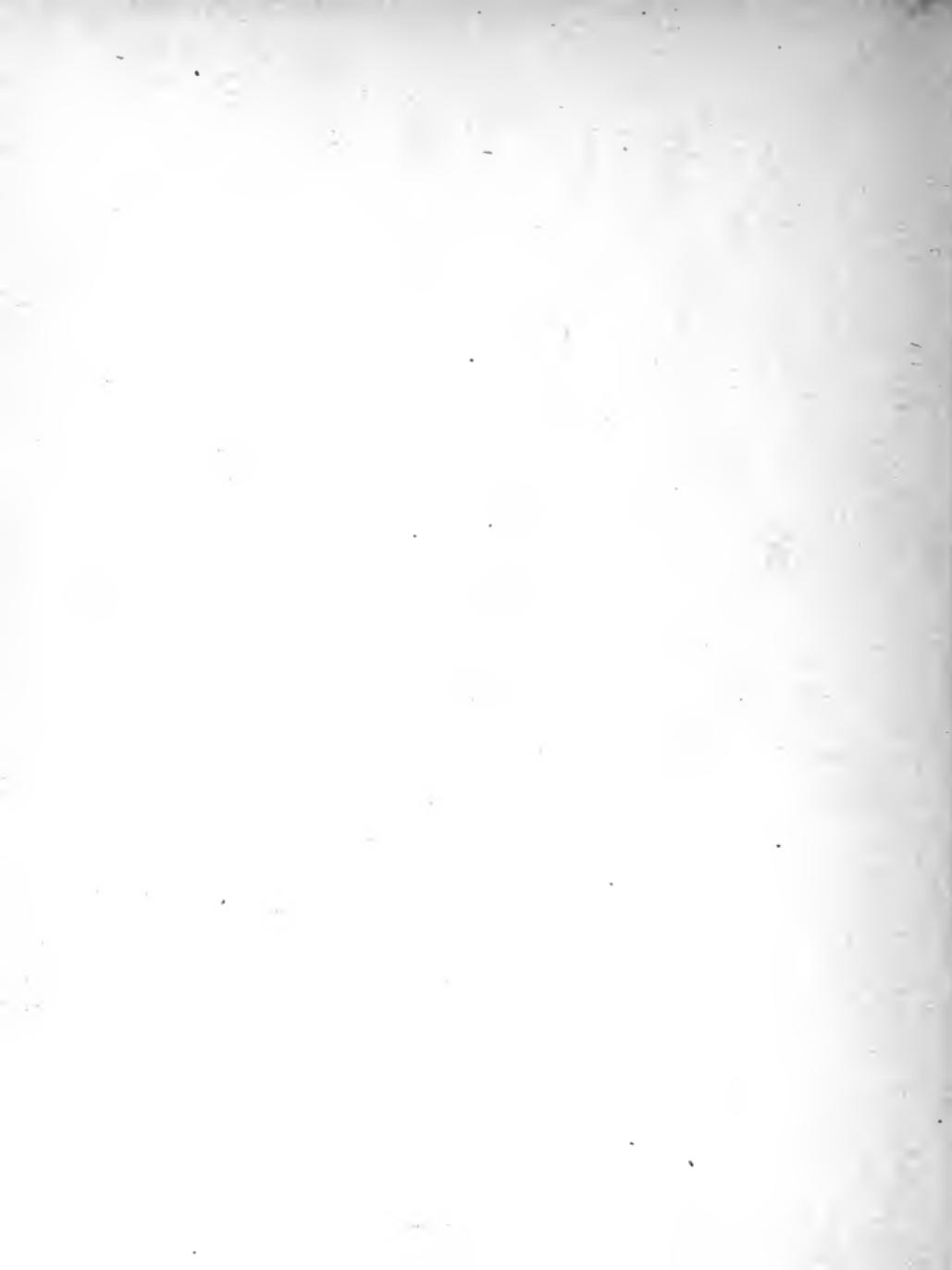
All literature abounds in classical allusions, but many do not understand their meaning. ¶ The force of an argument or the beauty of an illustration is therefore often lost. ¶ To avoid this, everyone should have at hand a complete dictionary such as this. ¶ It contains all the classical allusions worth knowing, and they are so ready of access as to require little or no time in looking up.

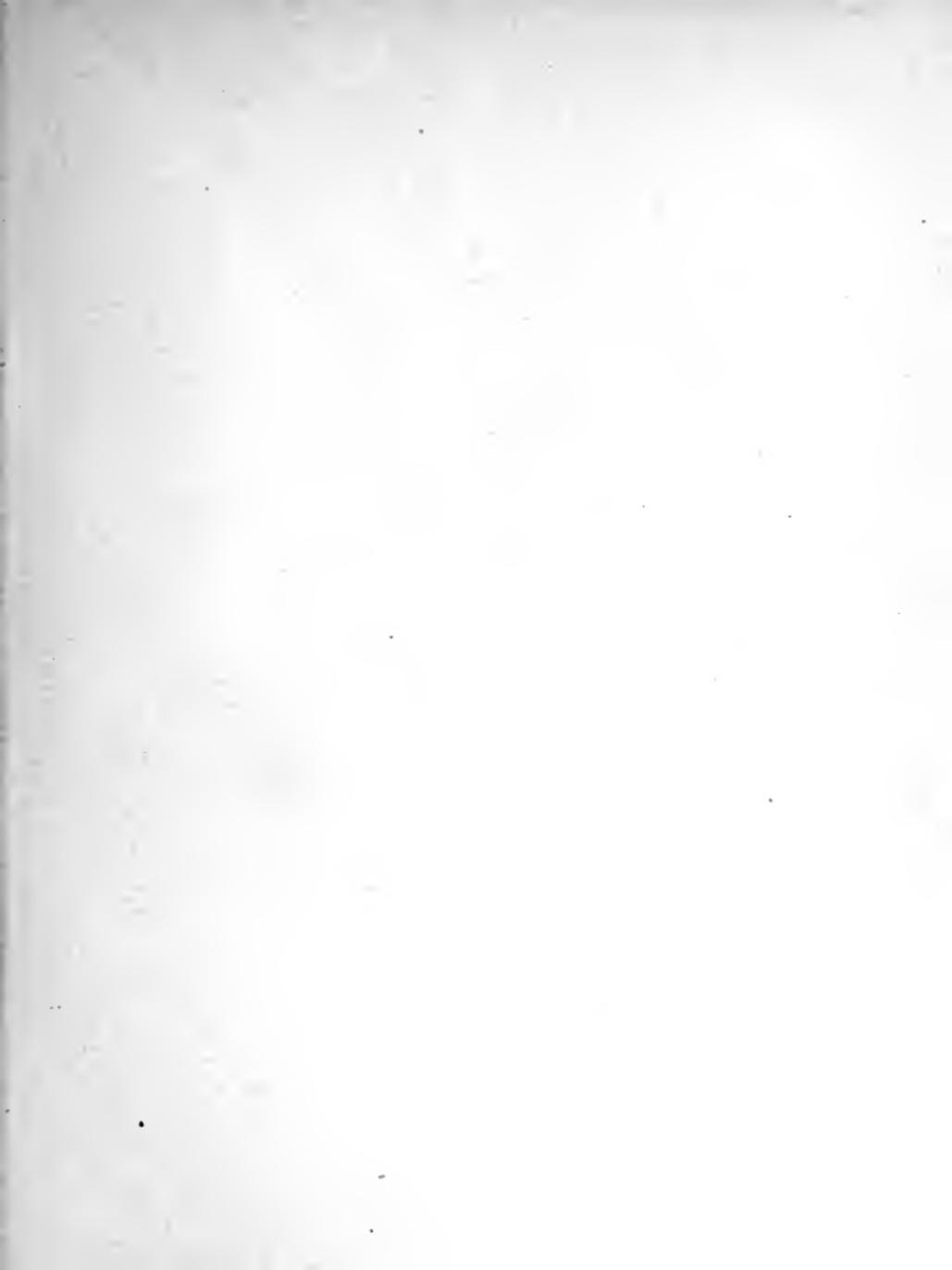
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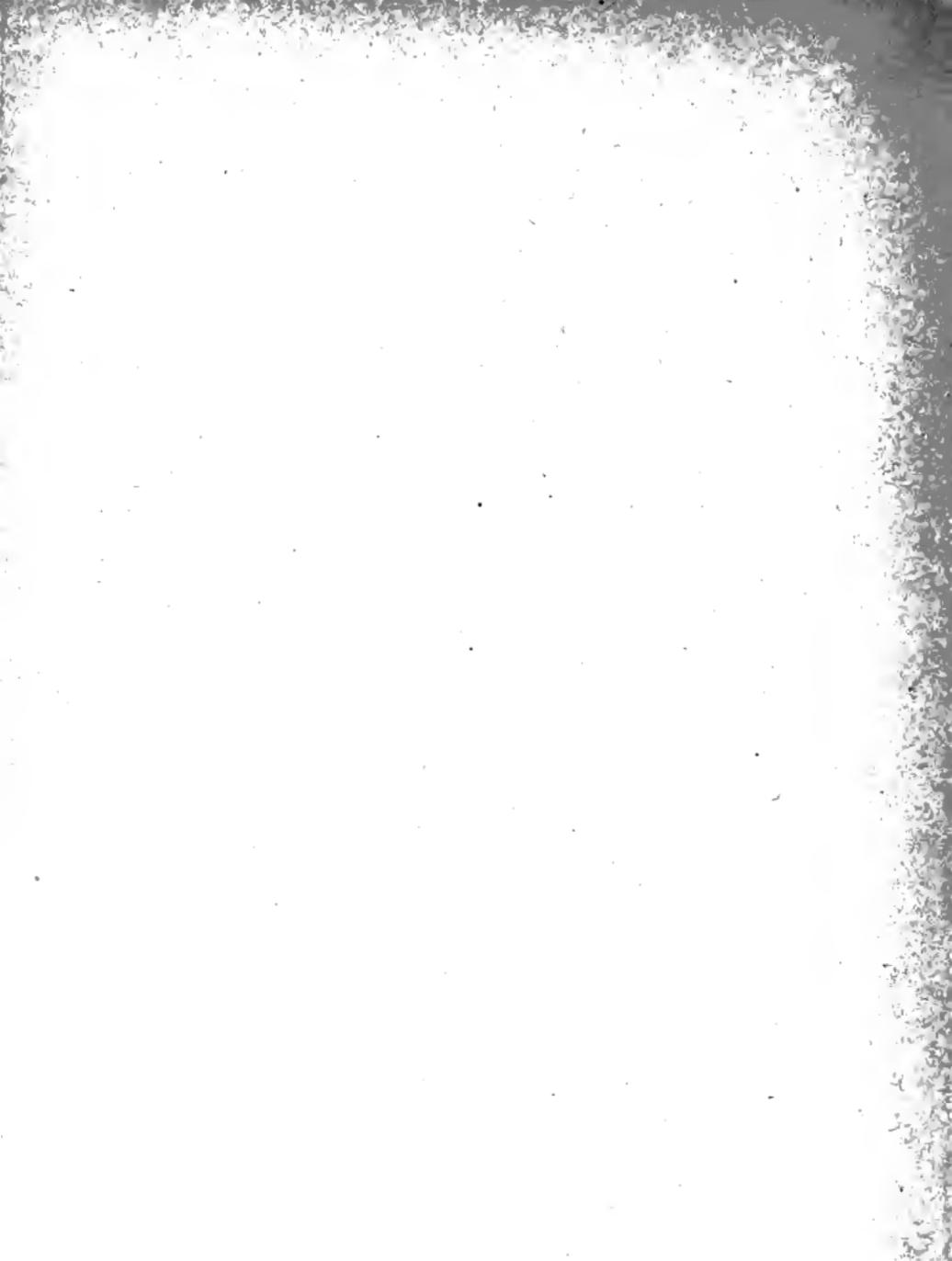
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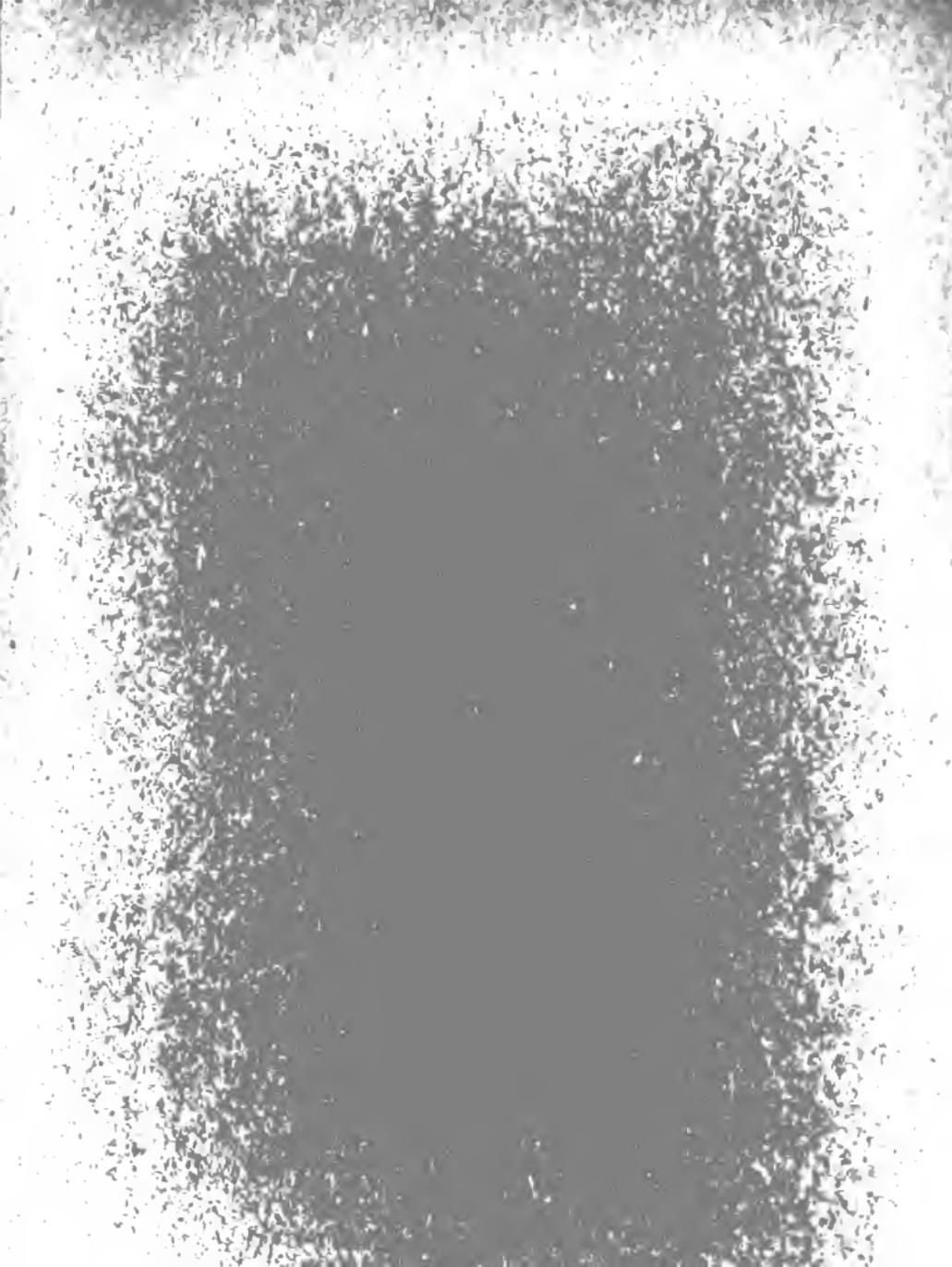
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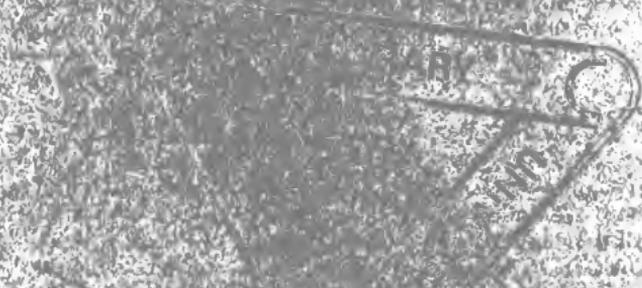












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